

THE BOOK
OF THE
PROPHET DANIEL.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

I.—*AS to the Author: Daniel was of the tribe of Judah; and of very illustrious, if not of royal descent. Josephus favours the latter opinion, and says he was of the family of Zedekiah, who was the last king of Judah before the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem by Nebuzaradan, the commander in chief of the Chaldean forces. At the beginning of the captivity he was carried away to Babylon, and was probably at that time not more than eighteen years of age. He was possessed of extraordinary endowments both of body and mind. The comeliness and strength of his person recommended him to the particular notice of the chief chamberlain among the Babylonians; and these qualities were increased by his habitual temperance and abstinence, under the peculiar blessing of God, insomuch that his figure was one of the most graceful of all that were appointed for the immediate attendance on king Nebuchadnezzar.*

But still the strength and habits of the mind must form the character; and these in Daniel were of a very superior cast, whether considered as the gifts of nature or of grace, or the acquisitions of well-applied industry. An excellent spirit was in him, which directed him to all the proper means of knowledge, and the right improvement of them; so that he became master of all the literature of the Chaldeans, and was ten times superior to all the Magi or wise men of the East: He was not only renowned for secular wisdom, but peculiarly favoured with divine illuminations; had most extraordinary insight into visions, and discernment in the interpretation of dreams. Qualified with these abilities he was admitted to the special favour of several very powerful monarchs, of Nebuchadnezzar, Belsazzar, Darius, and Cyrus: and hence he is presumed not only to have resided in the court at Babylon, but occasionally also in those of Media and Persia; thus finely illustrating that judicious aphorism of Solomon, Prov. xxii. 29.:

*Seest thou a man ready at dispatch in his business,
He shall be placed before kings, he shall not be placed before the obscure.*

Nor was he less distinguished for his virtues and graces, than for the extensive improvement of his understanding. His meekness, humility, and disinterestedness, his attachment to his friends, and ardent affection for his country, his fortitude in speaking the truth to kings, and the dexterity of his address in offering it in the most courteous and pleasing manner, are traits that are discernible upon the first attention to his character. But above all, his eminent piety, like an illustrious radiance, strikes through the whole of his book: and we need not wonder that he should be such an especial favourite of Heaven, who is every where and at all times solicitous to display his gratitude to the God of heaven, and to aspire constantly to the due acknowledgment of that universal Power, whose will is guided by the most bounteous beneficence, and exercised in the most diffusive manifestations of transcendent mercy.

The Scripture has given us but a short and unconnected account of this excellent man; but short and scattered as it is, we find in it some of the strongest lineaments of real character, and the most beautiful

beautiful marks of finished life. And in particular his great wisdom and exemplary piety are celebrated by his fellow-captive Ezekiel (ch. xiv. 14. xxviii. 3.) in that simple but bold energy of expression, which characterises the style of that ardent writer. Daniel lived to a good old age, to see the restoration of his captive brethren, and to enjoy the favour of that monarch who restored them to their beloved Zion. Some think that he returned with them to Jerusalem, but neither Ezra nor Nehemiah mention this circumstance, so that the opinion of Josephus is more probable, that he died among the Medes. Such is the example which the Scriptures afford us in the life of this holy man; his character as a prophet will fall more properly under the next point of discussion.

II.—*His Book*: It is a singular circumstance, that the language of this is of two distinct kinds; which, however, may fairly be accounted for without any imputation on the credit of the book, or the judgment of the author. The people of the Jews, during the time of the captivity, had in a great measure been compelled to a conformity with the manners and customs of Babylon: not only the proper names of several of their most eminent persons were altered, but their language had received into it many new words from the Chaldean; even their letters were changed, and the Chaldee character assumed in their stead. The prophet Daniel had been early taught the language of the Chaldeans, and from a long residence in the country may be presumed to have been well acquainted with it; his book also seems to have been designed not only for the Jews who returned from the captivity, but for those either Jews or Israelites who remained at Babylon, and not without regard to the benefit of the Chaldeans themselves, whose annals might receive confirmation from his work, and be alleged as vouchers of its authenticity. Now what could be more natural than that an author thus circumstanced should contrive his work in a manner the most extensively useful; and with this view should compose a part of it in the language of that country wherein he dwelt, and whose character he used, and the other part in the original language of the church of God.

The substance or matter contained in this book has been commonly divided into two classes; the historical in the six former chapters, and the prophetic in the six latter. Not but that there are visions or predictions in the historical part; yet these were not offered to Daniel, but to other persons, the circumstances of which he has recorded.

The well-known objections of Porphyry from the clearness, exact agreement with their completion, and such like peculiar marks of full evidence in these predictions, have been long since refuted by Eusebius, Jerom, and other writers; and however they may have been revived by modern Jews and Infidels in similar forms, and with as deeply rooted prejudices, yet it surely must be an argument of a temper strongly disposed to contention and cavil, to presume that those Scriptures were written after the events which they record, because the Holy Spirit of God had vouchsafed to point them out in so minute a manner. He, to whom all his works are known from the foundation of the world, could certainly foresee every contingency, and foretel every circumstance which would concur in their accomplishment.

Besides, this book in its present form was received into the canon of Scripture most probably from the earliest times; according to Josephus was exhibited to Alexander, in part at least, within 200 years after the death of Daniel; and, together with the other Scriptures, was translated by the LXX many years before the days of Antiochus; which translation was well known in the age of Jerom, and referred to by him, although not come down to us. For as to the edition lately published from a MS. in the Chigian Library at Rome, though it contains much useful information, yet it has often such evident marks of a paraphrase or other similar production, that it cannot claim the least pretension to a pure and unadulterated translation of the first authority. Since the times of Antiochus, as has been justly observed, it is impossible that such a work as this of Daniel could have been forged. Such a supposition cannot be entertained without the most palpable violation of the faith of history, and without the maintenance of such principles as would equally militate

militate against the whole code of the Old Testament. We must therefore receive the whole book as it now stands, according to the general sense of Jews and Christians, according to the express words of Josephus, who asserts it to be of divine authority, and according to the language of our Blessed Saviour himself, who cites the book of Daniel, and expressly calls the author of it a prophet, (Mark, xiii. 14.)

And if we reflect on the nature of his predictions we shall certainly be inclined to consider him as of the first rank among the prophets. The revelations of this prophetic part are only four, all of which were communicated to Daniel himself, with such an attention to the minuter circumstances or punctualities of place and time, as no other prophet had been favoured with. The former of these is indeed of a more general nature, and being a sort of epitome of the others, and written in Chaldee, may be presumed to have been designed for more general benefit; the second appears to be confined to the Persian and Grecian empires, yet with a distant respect to subsequent matters in later times. The third at chap. ix. is intended chiefly to typify and point out the coming of the Messiah, and its attendant circumstances; part of which Josephus himself applies to the times of the Romans: and the last seems to unfold some of the most distinguishing scenes relating to the church of God, from the full restoration of the Jews after the captivity to the final determination of all things. Thus is the chronological order properly observed in this arrangement; and the whole may be considered as one comprehensive view of things*, worthy the Divine interference, confirmed by the writings of the New Testament, to which the history of God's church has afforded an evident illustration from the commencement of the predictions to the present period, and which we doubt not will receive their finishing completion at that awful crisis, when we shall all, together with the prophet, stand up for the award of our decisive lot at the end of time.

It must be confessed, that in some of these predictions there is an apparent obscurity; but perhaps not greater than in those of other prophets, which look forward to distant and different periods of accomplishment. In all real prophecies the power and attributes of God are so far at least concerned as to be engaged for their truth, or, in other words, they must be true. The light, however, which we now enjoy is progressive and gradually advancing; many of the mists of ignorance and error are already dispersed. It is probable that they will, under the blessing of God, yield more and more to diligent and rational inquiry, that through the exertions of successive labourers new manifestations will continue to be disclosed, and hidden mysteries unfolded.—To say nothing of the rest, the revelation in ch. ix. evidently relates to two very distinguished events, two grand deliverances or redemptions, the one typical of the other. The latter of these had long before appeared to Abraham in the eye of faith, who rejoiced to see the day of its author; and therefore we have the less reason to wonder that Daniel was enabled to calculate the time of his coming. Certain it is, that it was the same Divine Spirit that illumined all the ancient prophets, that spake in times past to the fathers by them all: his communications were made to them at sundry times and in divers manners, but all were united and linked together in one great chain, swelling and enlarging as it approached to its end. The prophecies of Daniel had a very considerable share in this august series, with which the religion of Christ was fundamentally connected, and by the contemplation of which it is still maintained and established. The whole arrangement led on to the Messiah, and in him it finally terminates; so that we have every reason to conclude with the divine author of the Apocalypse, that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

* The prophecies of Daniel are all of them related to one another, as if they were but several parts of one general prophecy, given at several times: every following prophecy adds something new to the former. Sir Is. Newton's Observations on Daniel, p. i. c. 3.

CHAP. I.

Jehoiakim's captivity. Ashpenaz taketh Daniel, Hananiah, Misbael, and Azariah: they refusing the king's portion, do prosper with pulse and water: their excellency in wisdom.

[Before Christ 606.]

IN the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it.

2 And the LORD gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure-house of his god.

3 ¶ And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes;

4 Children in whom was no blemish, but

well-favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

5 And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.

6 Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Misbael, and Azariah:

7 Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Misbael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abed-nego.

CHAP. I.

THIS chapter relates the history of Daniel during the early part of his captivity, and especially the mode of treatment of himself and some young friends, before they were introduced to the personal attendance on king Nebuchadnezzar.

Ver. 1. In the third year] It was in the eighth year of Jehoiakim that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against him, and bound him in fetters to carry him to Babylon: 2 Chron. xxxvi. 6. But promising fidelity, the king of Babylon restored him to his kingdom, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years: 2 Kings, xxiv. 1. Daniel numbers the third year of Jehoiakim from this beginning of his renewed kingdom. In Jeremiah xxv. it is said to be the fourth year; which fourth year is called the first of king Nebuchadnezzar. These are easily reconciled, if in this place the word *came* be understood of the beginning and setting out upon this expedition; so that Nebuchadnezzar arrived at Jerusalem in the fourth year only.

Ver. 2. With part of the vessels] And part of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them, &c. Shinar was the original name of the country of Babylon.

Ver. 3, 4. The master—the king's seed] The prince—the royal seed: the Hebrew word for princes פֶּרְתָמִים *partemim*. Aquila and the LXX, as cited in Montfaucon's Hexapla, render it επιλεκτων, *choice persons*, and another Greek version ευγενων, *noble, well-born*; it seems a compound of the Persian פר *per*, from the Hebrew פֶּאֶר *peer*, to be glorious, honourable; and תָּם *tam*, perfect; and so expresses the most honourable, or noble. Bishop Chandler observes, that the word פֶּר or פֶּאֶר enters into the composition of several names of the princes and nobles among the Medes and Persians, as Pharnaces, Pharnaspes, Pharnuchus, Phraortes, Phraates, Phradates, &c. See his Vindication, book i. p. 58. and Parkhurst on the word פֶּרְתָם. The prince of the eunuchs was directed to make choice of

such persons as had the best accomplishments both of body and mind; as being the more fit to attend at court. The word לְיָדָיִם *ieladim*, rendered *children*, does not extend to *childhood*, but refers to more advanced years; (comp. 2 Kings, ii. 23, 24.) nor can we suppose Daniel or his companions to have been less than eighteen or twenty years of age at this time; as may be concluded from Daniel's being put into a considerable post and employment in the government soon after. Houbigant renders it, *youths*; and so it should be rendered throughout the chapter. Instead of, *Skilful in all wisdom, to learn knowledge, and to attain science*; for, says he, a knowledge and skill in all the sciences was not required in these young men, but only a facility to learn them; and it appears from the 17th verse, that they did learn letters and wisdom while they were educated under the prince of the eunuchs. Instead of, *And whom they might teach, we may read, And that he should have them taught.*

Ver. 5. So nourishing them three years] That after they had been educated for three years, at the end, &c. Houbigant; or, *And that they should be thus bred up three years, and at the end thereof they should stand, &c.*

Ver. 7. Unto whom, &c.] This change of names was a mark of dominion and authority: masters imposed new names upon their slaves. Daniel signifies, *God is my judge, or the judgment of God*; Belshazzar—the treasurer of Baal, or, “The depositary of the secrets, or treasure of Baal.” Hananiah signifies, *God has been gracious to me*; or, “That which is gracious and acceptable to the Lord.” Shadrach signifies, according to some, *The inspiration of the sun*: or, according to others, *God guard us from evil*. Misbael,—*He who comes from, or is of Meshach*, “He who belongs to the goddesses Meshach.” A celebrated divinity of the Babylonians, whereof Jeremiah speaks, ch. xxv. 26. Azariah signifies, *God is my succour*;—*Abed-nego, the servant*

8 ¶ But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

9 Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.

10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which *are* of your sort? then shall ye make *me* endanger my head to the king.

11 Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,

12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.

13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.

14 So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.

15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.

16 Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.

17 ¶ As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

18 Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.

19 And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king.

20 And in all matters of wisdom *and* understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the ma-

of the god *Nego*, which was the *sun*, or the *morning-star*. See Calmet.

Ver. 8. Daniel purposed in his heart] Daniel had two reasons for refusing the meat from the king's table: first, because the heathens ate indiscriminately all sorts of food, and consequently such as was forbidden by the law of Moses: the *second*, because it was the custom of most nations before their meals, to make an offering of some part of what they were to eat or drink to their gods: so that every entertainment had something in it of the nature of a sacrifice. This practice generally prevailing, made Daniel and his friends look upon the provisions coming from the king's table as no better than meats offered to idols, and consequently polluted and unclean. See Calmet.

Ver. 9. Tender love] רַחֲמִים *rachamim*, Bowels of compassion. It has a like sense also at ch. ii. 18. The word is of very strong import, and denotes a kind of parental compassion. St. Paul has an expression somewhat like it, if not stronger, in his epistle to Philemon, verse 12. "Receive him, that is mine own bowels." And we read of bowels of mercies, &c.

Ver. 12. Pulse] *Pulse* here signifies all sorts of *roots* or *herbs*.

Ver. 17. Dreams] Namely, those sent from God to portend future events; which were easily distinguished from fortuitous dreams; if, for instance, they had nothing in them preposterous, nothing irregular, nothing monstrous; and if the whole order and consequences of things were regularly preserved in them, from beginning

to end: for nothing of this kind happens in fortuitous dreams; which generally exhibit irregular, unconnected appearances, and which greatly depend upon the disposition of the body, as well as of the mind. The Chaldeans were very much attached to the study of dreams; but the Scripture gives us to understand here, that Daniel's attaining to any distinguished knowledge of these things, was by the immediate gift of God. See Houbigant and Calmet.

Ver. 20. Magicians and astrologers] These names may perhaps be taken in a good sense, as the *wise men* in St. Matthew; and the *astrologers* perhaps were then in general the same as *astronomers* with us. However, it cannot be collected from these words, that Daniel applied himself to the study of magic arts; but to the sciences of the Chaldees; in the same manner as Moses, long before, had applied himself to the study of the wisdom of Egypt. See Houbigant. The word אֲשַׁפִּים *ashaphim*, rendered *astrologers*, possibly, says Parkhurst, might be derived from נָשַׁף *neshep*, to breathe, on account of the divine inspirations that they pretended to. Others have given a different account of the word: צַפָּה *tzapha*, or *sapha*, as the Assyrians and Babylonians commonly speak it, signifies to speculate, look about, inquire nicely; which being part of the office of the prophets, they were called *zaphim*. For the same cause, such as spent their time in contemplating the works of nature, the situation of the stars, and their influence on the earth, as the *magi* (by which word, except in one place, the LXX render אֲשַׁפִּים *ashaphim*;) and *astrologers* did, were named *assaphim* at Babylon; as much as

gicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.

21 And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.

to say, *contemplative men.* See Vindic. of Defence, chap. i. sec. 2.

Ver. 21. And Daniel continued] He was known, employed, and continued under Nebuchadnezzar and his successors, till the monarchy passed from the Chaldeans to the Persians, in the person of Cyrus; under which prince also he maintained his authority.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, God had threatened Hezekiah, to punish him for his pride, that the treasures in which he gloried should be plundered by the king to whose ambassadors he had vainly shewed them, and his children led into captivity. The fulfilment of that prophecy is here recorded. In the third of Jehoiakim, which was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar, that conqueror invaded Judæa, and besieged and took Jerusalem; yet, not designing intirely to subvert the government, he left the king in possession of his royal dignity, though a tributary, and contented himself with the plunder of a part of the vessels of the sanctuary, as a trophy of his victory, and to be placed in the temple of his god, as a tribute of thankfulness for his success. So much more devotion and gratitude do idolaters often shew to their false gods, than the professors of the Christian religion pay to the only living and true Jehovah. He chose also the most promising and ingenious youths, that were of royal or noble extraction, to be trained up in his court, and qualified for offices of trust and government under him. Thus while he rendered them useful ministers of state, they served also as hostages for the fidelity of their parents. We may observe,

1. The directions given for the choice of these youths, which shewed the consummate wisdom and policy of the monarch. They must be without deformity, *well-favoured*, the lovely countenance bespeaking often the sweet disposition of the mind. They must be young, that they might more readily incorporate with the people among whom they were captives, and learn their manners and language: and persons of genius and learning, well skilled in all the knowledge that was proper for their years and station, and likely to improve under the tuition of their Chaldean masters.

2. The care taken of their maintenance and education. Three years they were liberally maintained at the king's expence, and under the most accomplished masters, that they might become acquainted with the language, laws, arts, and learning of the Chaldeans; and, at the expiration of this time, be qualified to appear before the king, and fill that department most suited to their genius and capacity. *Note;* (1.) The good education of youth is a public concern. (2.) They who wish to serve their generation, must spend their earlier days not in idleness or pleasure, but study: if that season be lost, it is afterwards scarcely to be redeemed.

3. Among these youths four are particularly mentioned, as rendering themselves most remarkable in the succeeding history. Their names were, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. (See the annotations.) These the prince of

the eunuchs changed into other names; either to shew his authority over them; or to intimate that they were now naturalized, and become Chaldeans; or in honour of the gods of Babylon, instead of the God of Israel, whose name they bore; and hoping perhaps the more easily to seduce them to the worship of the idols after whom they were now called. But though their names were changed, their hearts were the same; and, far from serving these idols, they approved themselves the servants of the true God.

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1. Daniel a favourite with the prince of the eunuchs. His own amiable qualities, no doubt, deserved regard; but the singular affection that he found in this heathen master was from God, who hath in his hand the hearts of all men. If we find favour, therefore, with those from whom perhaps we least expected it, let us acknowledge this to be the gift of God.

2. He is scrupulously careful to maintain a conscience void of offence. The king had allowed him and his companions a liberal maintenance; but they feared to defile themselves with the meat and wine of the king; either as being such food as was forbidden by their law, or as having been offered in sacrifice to idols, or blessed in their name: they rather therefore chose to live upon the plainest and coarsest diet, than on these delicacies; and Daniel, as their spokesman, intercedes for them with the prince of the eunuchs, that they might be excused from using the king's provision, and be permitted to live on pulse and water; hard fare for the sons of princes! *Note;* (1.) They who would preserve their souls from sin, must keep a strict guard over their sensual appetites. (2.) The poorest repast eaten with a good conscience, is a more delicious morsel than all the dainties of the luxurious. (3.) They who have a sense of the evil of sin, will think no suffering or self-denial hard, in order to escape from it. (4.) Humble entreaty will prevail on those, whom obstinate refusal would but have exasperated; as was the case here; for,

3. The prince of the eunuchs, after some objections, consents. He was fearful, lest such spare diet should make these young princes look worse than their fellows; the consequence of which would perhaps be the anger of the king, and might cost him his head. But as Daniel and his companions desire only ten days trial by way of experiment, he is satisfied to wait that time, and compare them with the others: or else Melzar, the officer to whose care they were intrusted, and to whom Daniel addressed anew his request, grants them this liberty, perhaps with the connivance of his superior; and the event justified the experiment; for at the expiration of the ten days, these were fairer and fatter than the others who had feasted on the king's delicacies. *Note;* (1.) An abstemious diet is the best friend to health. (2.) Let the poor, who are reduced to pulse and water, remember, that God's blessing can make these preferable to a stalled ox. (3.) Whatever we deny ourselves for God's glory, shall, in the issue, prove our greatest gain.

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C H A P. II.

Nebuchadnezzar, forgetting his dream, requireth it of the Chaldeans by promises and threatenings. They, acknowledging their inability, are adjudged to die. Daniel, obtaining some respite, findeth the dream: he bleisseth God; stayeth the decree, and is brought to the king. The dream. The interpretation. Daniel's advancement.

[Before Christ 603.]

AND in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar

1. The great progress in learning which these gracious youths made under the divine blessing. They minded their business; and God eminently blessed them, giving them singular skill and knowledge; and Daniel in particular was endued with *understanding in all visions and dreams*, which he was enabled to interpret, not by any pretended rules of art, but by divine inspiration; and in these also God was pleased to make known unto him future events.

2. The king highly honoured them at the expiration of the three years. When he came to examine into the proficiency of these students, he found none to be compared with these four: he therefore took them into his service, and dignified them with a seat at his council-board. And he had abundant reason to approve the choice that he had made of them; for *in all matters of wisdom and understanding, respecting the conduct of affairs private or public, they were ten times better* than the wisest and most experienced of his counsellors, and the most celebrated of the magicians. From this time till the first year of Cyrus, Daniel continued at court and in favour, and lived to see that happy event, the restoration of his people to their own land. *Note*; (1.) They who singly make God's glory their aim, most effectually consult their own honour and happiness. (2.) Wisdom is not always confined to age: when God teaches, he can give to youth more understanding than the ancients.

C H A P. II.

IN this chapter Nebuchadnezzar having dreamed, and been much affected thereby, is solicitous to know his dreams, and the meaning of them. He applies in vain to the wise men of his own country for information, and, being disgusted at their inability, orders them all to be slain. Daniel is sought after among the number, but on application to God he learns the dream and the interpretation, and arrests the execution of the sentence. He explains the dream to the king, as relating to the four great kingdoms of the earth, and the establishment of the kingdom of the Messiah under the fourth: whereupon the king admires his skill, acknowledges the power of his God, and advances Daniel and his friends to great honours and preferments.

Ver. 1. And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar] As the affairs of Babylon have so considerable a share in the historical parts of the book of Daniel, as well as in other parts of Scripture, it may not be amiss to give

dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him.

2 Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the soothsayers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king.

3 And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream.

here a short sketch of the kingdom of Babylon, previous to the reign of this monarch.

Whether the Assyrian empire was of very early date according to some of the Greek writers and chronicles, or whether its commencement was not till a much later period according to modern chronologists, it is agreed on all sides, that the origin of this and of the Babylonian monarchy must be traced from nearly the same source. And accordingly we read in the 10th chapter of Genesis, ver. 10, 11. that Nimrod the son of Cush and grandson of Ham, who seems to have been the first founder of extensive or regal authority, had the beginning of his kingdom in Babel or Babylon in the land of Shinar, as this country was still called in the time of Daniel. Chap. i. 2. Out of this land he went forth into Assyria, or it may be, as most of the versions read, Ashur or an Assyrian went forth, (that is, not one of the sons of Shem, but a person either of that name, or who took his name from the country,) and built Nineveh and other cities. The descendants of these people seem for a considerable time to have followed the way of life of their founder, to have lived upon plunder and rapine in a rude uncivilized state, and not to have been much esteemed among the nations; till some potent king of Assyria collected them together, and settled them in Babylon and the country round about it. Bishop Lowth supposes this king to have been Ninus, and to have lived in the time of the Judges, following the testimony of Herodotus, who is understood to say, that the Assyrian monarchy lasted but 520 years.

The history of Assyria and Babylon from Ninus* to this last-named period, is involved in much uncertainty, as we have scarcely any authentic evidence to have recourse to, the testimony of the Greek writers wearing for the

* Mr. Bruce, in his Travels, book ii. chap. i. speaks of Semiramis, and the immense riches of the Assyrian empire, which Montelquieu thinks proceeded chiefly from rapine and plunder of other nations in war; but which Mr. Bruce more justly imputes to her connexions with India; and that as the commerce with that peninsula was unknown by sea, the whole must have been carried on by land only, and all nations of the continent must have received from her markets a supply of Indian stores. See Prelim. Dif. Upon this principle he accounts also for a passage in Solomon's Proverbs, chap. vii. 16. where he says, that he decked his bed with coverings of tapestry of Egypt. Now Egypt had neither silk nor cotton manufactory, nor even wool. Solomon's coverings, therefore, though he had them from Egypt, were an article of barter with India.

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4 Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation.

5 The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill.

6 But if ye shew the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honour: therefore shew me the dream and the interpretation thereof.

7 They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation of it.

8 The king answered and said, I know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me.

9 But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, *there is but* one decree for you: for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can shew me the interpretation thereof.

10 ¶ The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: there-

most part the appearance of fable, and the Scriptures throwing very little light on the matter.

The next Assyrian king of the Scriptures is Tiglath-pileser, supposed to have been the son of Pul; and after him follow Shalmanezzer and Senacherib: during the reign of one of which monarchs, perhaps the former, the kingdom of Babylon and Chaldea seems to have revolted, and it is probable from Herodotus, not long after the time that the Medes did, from the Assyrian empire. The first prince after this revolt, at least the first whom we have any certain knowledge of, seems to have been Nabonassar, the founder of the famous æra, which commenced with his reign, and was called by his name. Several other princes or kings succeeded him in this kingdom, of whom little more is known than their names, which are recorded by the celebrated astronomer Ptolemy. But in the twenty-seventh year after the commencement of his father's kingdom his son Mardoc Empadus, or Mero-dach Baladan, began to reign over Babylon, which was the prince that sent to congratulate Hezekiah king of Judah on his miraculous recovery, 2 Kings, xx. and Isaiah, xxxix. and probably to enter into an alliance with him against Senacherib, the king of the other part of the Assyrian empire. After this monarch had reigned over Babylon twelve years, he was succeeded by several princes, who, in their turns, governed Babylon for a short period of about twenty years; when it became in a state of anarchy for eight years more, and was at length united by Assaradinus or Efar-haddon, the son of Senacherib, to the Assyrian empire. This happened about the nineteenth year of Manasseh, that wretched prince, who succeeded his father the good Hezekiah in the kingdom of Judah.

I must not stop to mention the completion of several remarkable events in the history of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, which took place during the reign of Efar-haddon over Assyria, but must refer the reader to the narratives recorded in the 2d book of Kings, the prophecy of Isaiah, ch. vii. viii. and the book of Ezra, or to Dr. Prideaux and others, who have written the Scripture history. It is sufficient to observe, that the remainder of the tribes of Israel were entirely carried away by this prince, and irre-

coverably sunk among other nations, and that the king of Judah was also carried by him to Babylon, though soon after he released him, and restored him to his liberty and his kingdom.

In the thirty-first of Manasseh, Efar-haddon died, after he had reigned thirteen years over the Babylonians united to the kingdom of Assyria: he was succeeded by Saosduchius his son, the Nabuchodonosor of the book of Judith, whose successor was Chyniladan, and whose reign commenced in the fifty-first year of Manasseh, or the hundred-and-first of the æra of Nabonassar. From this effeminate and profligate king, Nabopolassar his general seized the Babylonian part of the empire, and reigned over his native country twenty-one years. This revolt took place in the eighteenth year of Josiah king of Judah, about twenty-five years after the then Assyrian monarch began his reign; and at length by an union of this king of Babylon with the princes of Media, that great city Niniveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire, was taken and destroyed, the empire was extinguished, and the people reduced under the yoke of Babylon and Media. This union was effected by the marriage of his son Nebuchadnezzar or Nabocolassar, as he is called by Ptolemy, with Amyite, the daughter of Astyages, of the kingdom of the Medes; and this is the prince of whose history so much is recorded by Daniel, and who, after the death of the good king Josiah, in the reign of his sons, carried away so many captives from Judæa unto Babylon, at that time the capital of the whole united empire.

Ver. 2. His dreams: so they came] His dream: wherefore they came.

Ver. 3. Was troubled] Is distressed.

Ver. 5. If ye will not] If ye do not. Instead of, made a dunghill, Houbigant reads, shall be confiscated, or sold by public sale.

Ver. 8. I know, &c.] " You only want to protract the time, either that the dream may return, or that my uneasiness may be dissipated; and that, occupied in other affairs, I may think no more of the dream. But I will have from you immediately a positive answer, and a precise explication." However tyrannical this may appear

fore *there is* no king, lord, nor ruler, *that* asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean.

11 And *it is* a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.

12 For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise *men* of Babylon.

13 And the decree went forth that the wise *men* should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain.

14 ¶ Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise *men* of Babylon:

15 He answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, Why *is* the decree *so* hasty from the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel.

16 Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation.

17 Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions;

18 That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise *men* of Babylon.

19 Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

20 Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his:

21 And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding:

22 He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what *is* in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him.

23 I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast *now* made known unto us the king's matter.

24 ¶ Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise *men* of Babylon: he went and said thus unto him; Destroy not the wise *men* of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will shew unto the king the interpretation.

25 Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus unto him, I have found a man of the captives of Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation.

26 The king answered and said to Daniel,

pear in the king, his reasoning must be allowed to be very just and right; for if the astrologers could obtain from their gods the knowledge of future events by the explication of a dream, certainly the same gods could have made known to them what the dream was.

Ver. 13. Daniel and his fellows] Companions: Houbigant; and so ver. 18.

Ver. 14. The captain of the king's guard] Literally, chief of the king's executioners. Gr. ἀρχιμαγειρος: the chief butcher. The term רב טבחיא rab tabbachaias, may probably mean, the leader of the guard appointed for capital punishments. Nor does this office seem to have been at all infamous; for Arioch had free access to the king, as we find at ver. 25. see also 1 Sam. xv. 33. And perhaps his office might be to execute any of the king's commands on his subjects, whether they related to honour or dishonour, to life or to death. The same title is given to Nebuzaradan, 2 Kings, xxv. 8. and from the character of the commander, it seems to mean a person of the first authority over the soldiery. Mr. Bruce speaks of an officer called the executioner of the camp, whose busi-

ness it was to attend at capital punishments; and this officer belonged only to a detachment of the royal Assyrian army.

Ver. 15. Why is the decree so hasty] Why is this dreadful decree gone forth from the king? Houbigant.

Ver. 18. That they would] That they might.

This secret] Many useful observations might be drawn from this passage, on the nature, the efficacy, and the rewards of devotion; on the power and prevalency of united addresses to Heaven; and the important benefits which the piety of a few holy men may sometimes bring down upon a multitude.

Ver. 19. Then was the secret revealed] It is generally thought that this secret was revealed to Daniel only, and that in sleep, by a dream. Full of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, which denoted the succession and change of the great monarchies, Daniel humbly acknowledges before God, ver. 21. that time and its duration, as well as the elevation and abasement of states and empires, are entirely in his hand.

Ver. 23. Who hast given] Because thou hast given.

Ver.

whose name *was* Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?

27 Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise *men*, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king;

28 But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these;

29 As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came *into thy mind* upon thy bed, what should come

to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known unto thee what shall come to pass.

30 But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for *any* wisdom that I have more than any living, but for *their* sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart.

31 ¶ Thou, O king, sawest and beheld a great image. This great image, whose brightness *was* excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof *was* terrible.

32 This image's head *was* of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass,

Ver. 28. And maketh known, &c.] The impious king had a prophetic dream; that the saint interpreting it, God might be glorified, and the captives, and those who served God in captivity, might receive consolation. We read the same thing of Pharaoh: not that Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar deserved to see such things, but that Joseph and Daniel, by interpreting them, might be preferred to all others: and that Nebuchadnezzar might admire the grace of divine inspiration, Daniel not only told him what he saw in his dream, but also what he thought within himself before his dream. See Bishop Newton on the Prophecies, vol. i. p. 406.

Ver. 30. But as for me, &c. But for their sakes, &c.] And as for me, &c. But that the interpretation may be made known to the king. Houbigant.

Ver. 31. Behold a great image] It appears from ancient coins and medals, that cities and people were often represented by the figures of men and women. A great and terrible human figure was therefore no improper emblem of human power and dominion; and the various metals of which it was composed, not unfitly typify the various kingdoms which should arise. It consisted of four different metals, gold, silver, and brass, mixed with iron and clay; and these four metals, according to Daniel's own interpretation, mean so many kingdoms; and the order of the succession is clearly denoted by the order of the parts; the head and higher parts signify the earlier times, and the lower parts the later times. Hesiod, who lived two hundred years before Daniel, mentioned the four ages of the world under the symbols of these metals; so that this vision, according to the good pleasure of God, was formed according to the commonly received notion, and the commonly received notion was not first propagated from this vision. See Bishop Newton, and Chandler's Defence, p. 96.

Ver. 32. This image's head was of fine gold] This Daniel interprets thus, ver. 38. *Thou art this head of gold; thou, and thy family, and thy representatives.* The Babylonian therefore was the first of these kingdoms, and it was fitly represented by the *head of fine gold*, on account of its great riches; and Babylon, for the same reason, was called the

golden city by Isaiah, chap. xiv. 4. The Assyrian is usually said to be the first of the four great empires, and the name may be allowed to pass, if it be not taken too strictly: for the Assyrian empire, properly so called, was dissolved before this time, and the Babylonian was erected in its stead: but the Babylonians are sometimes called Assyrians in the best classic authors, as well as in the Holy Scriptures. The next clause, *His breasts and arms of silver*, Daniel interprets, ver. 39. *After thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee.* It is very well known, that the kingdom which arose after the Babylonian was the Medo-Perian. The two hands and the shoulders, signify that the empire of the Babylonians should be destroyed by two kings. The two kings were the kings of the Medes and Persians, whose powers were united under Cyrus, who was son of one of the kings, and son-in-law of the other, and who besieged and took Babylon, put an end to that empire, and on its ruin erected the Medo-Perian, or the Persian, as it is more usually called, the Persians having soon gained the ascendant over the Medes. The empire is said to be *inferior*, as being *less* than the former, according to the Vulgate translation, because neither Cyrus, nor any of his successors, ever carried their arms into Africa or Spain so far as Nebuchadnezzar is reported to have done; or rather as being worse, according to Castalio; for indeed it may be very truly asserted, that the kings of Persia in general were the worst race of men that ever governed an empire. This empire, from its first establishment by Cyrus, to the death of Darius Codomannus, lasted not much above two hundred years. *Of the third kingdom, specified by the belly and thighs of brass, we are told, ver. 39. That it should bear rule over all the earth.* It is universally known, that Alexander the Great subverted the Persian empire. The kingdom therefore which succeeded to the Persian was the Macedonian or Grecian, and this kingdom was fitly represented by *brass*; for the Greeks were famous for their brazen armour, their usual epithet being "The brazen-coated Greeks." The *third* kingdom is said to *bear rule over all the earth*, by a figure usual almost in all authors. Alexander himself commands, that he should be called *the king of all the world*, not that he really

33 His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.

34 Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet *that were* of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.

35 Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces

together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

36 ¶ This *is* the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king.

really conquered the whole world, but that he had considerable dominions in Europe, Asia, and Africa; that is, in all the three parts of the world then known. Diodorus Siculus, and other writers, give an account of ambassadors coming from almost all the world to congratulate him upon his success; and then especially, as Arrian remarks, did Alexander himself appear to himself, and to those about him, to be master of *both all the earth and all the sea*: so that the *third* kingdom must comprehend not only Alexander, but likewise the Macedonian princes who succeeded him. This will appear the more probable, because the former kingdoms comprehended all the succeeding princes of the same house and nation, even till the ruin of their empire, and its translation to the different prince and nation which succeeded to the sovereign power and dominion. See Bishop Newton as above, and Dr. Chandler's Vindication of Daniel, p. 98.

Ver. 33. His legs of iron, &c.] This the prophet has interpreted, *ver. 40—43.* The fourth kingdom is there described as stronger than the preceding: as iron breaketh and bruiseeth all other metals, so this breaketh and subdueth all the former kingdoms. This kingdom too is represented as divided into ten *toes*: the metal is here different, and consequently likewise the nation must be different from the preceding. The four metals must signify four different nations; and as the gold signified the Babylonians, the silver the Persians, and the brass the Macedonians, so the iron must necessarily denote some other nation; and it may safely be said, that there is not a nation upon earth to which this description is applicable, but the Roman. The Romans succeeded to the Macedonians, and therefore in course were next to be mentioned. The Roman empire was stronger and larger than any of the preceding. The Romans brake in pieces and subdued all the former kingdoms. As the two *arms of silver* denoted the two kings of the Medes and Persians, so the two *legs of iron* seem equally to have signified the two Roman consuls. The *iron was mixed with clay*; and the Romans were defiled with a mixture of barbarous nations. The Roman empire was at length divided into ten lesser kingdoms answering to the ten *toes* of the image. These kingdoms retained much of the old Roman strength; so that the kingdom was *partly strong and partly broken*. It subdued Syria, and made the kingdom of the Seleucidæ a Roman province in the year 65 before Christ: it subdued Egypt, and made the kingdom of the Lagidæ a Roman province in the year 30 before Christ; and in the fourth century after Christ, it began to be torn in pieces by the incursions of the barbarous nations. Mr. Mede, who was as able and consummate a judge as any in these

matters, observes, "That the Roman empire was the *fourth* kingdom of Daniel, was believed by the church of Israel both before and in our Saviour's time; received by the disciples of the apostles, and the whole Christian church for the first three hundred years, without any known contradiction: and I confess, having so good ground in Scripture, it is with me, *tantum non articulus fidei*; little less than an article of faith." See his Works, book iv. ep. vi. p. 736.; and Bishop Newton.

Ver. 34, 35. A stone was cut out without hands] *Stone*, in Scripture, stands for king or kingdom, as *mountain* doth for a metropolis; the seat of a kingdom governed by a royal race: and being here a different mineral from those in the image, implied that this kingdom should not only be different in number, or be a distinct empire, but likewise of another nature from that of the image, which was worldly and temporal. *It was cut without hands*; that is to say, was rough in its original, formed to what it was without polishing or art; signifying that the success of this new kingdom shall not be owing to human policy or assistance. *This stone smote the image on the feet, &c.* that is to say, it became an universal empire, in the room of the whole image, or the empires comprehended under it. This description can with propriety be understood only of the kingdom of Christ. The stone was totally a different thing from the *image*, and the kingdom of Christ is totally different from the kingdoms of the world. *The stone was cut out of the mountain without hands*, as our heavenly body is said, 2 Cor. v. 1. to be *a building of God, a house not made with hands*; that is to say, spiritual—as the phrase is used in other places. Its first beginning was to be but small, as a *stone* in comparison of a *mountain*: *It was to be cut out of the mountain.* *The great mountain*, evidently signifies a *large* empire or kingdom, and *the stone cut out of the mountain*, means, that the fifth kingdom should rise out of the fourth, or in the very Roman empire itself. It was not only to commence during the fourth kingdom, but actually to arise out of it; which description is so particular, that it can agree with nothing else but the kingdom of the Lord, which arose out of the Roman empire, and gradually spread itself all over it. Again, it was to be *cut out without hands*, begun with no human power, but, as it were, invisibly by God himself, yet at last, to grow so extensive, as to comprehend within itself the four empires before mentioned. The passage then should be understood of the kingdom of Christ, which was formed out of the Roman empire, not by number of hands, or strength of armies, but without human means and the virtue of second causes. This kingdom was *to fill the whole earth*, to become universal, and *to stand for ever.* As to the fourth

37 Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.

38 And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold.

39 And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.

40 And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces

and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.

41 And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay.

42 And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken.

43 And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not

fourth kingdom, or the Roman empire, it was represented in a two-fold state; first strong and flourishing, with legs of iron; and then weakened and divided with feet and toes, part of iron, and part of clay: so this fifth kingdom, or the kingdom of Christ, is described likewise in two states, which Mr. Mede rightly distinguishes by the names of the kingdom of the stone, and the kingdom of the mountain; the first when the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, the second when it became itself a mountain, and filled the whole earth. The stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, the kingdom of Christ was first set up, while the empire was in its full strength, with legs of iron. The Roman empire was afterwards divided into ten lesser kingdoms, the remains of which are still subsisting. The image is still standing upon his feet and toes of iron and clay; the kingdom of Christ is yet a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence: but the stone will one day smite the image upon the feet and toes, and utterly destroy it, and will itself become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth: or in the words of the apostle, Rev. xi. 15. *The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.* We have therefore seen the kingdom of the stone, but we have not yet seen the kingdom of the mountain. Some parts of this prophecy still remain to be fulfilled; but the exact completion of the other parts will not suffer us to doubt of the accomplishment of the rest also in due season. See Bishop Newton, Bishop Chandler's Defence, p. 96. and Dr. Chandler's Vindication of Daniel, p. 135.

Ver. 37, 38. *Thou, O king, art a king of kings, &c.*] Daniel addresses Nebuchadnezzar, as if he was a very powerful king, and his empire very large and extensive. The monarch might, perhaps, think, like some of his predecessors, that his conquests were owing to his own fortitude and prudence. See Isai. x. 13. But the prophet assures him, that his success must be primarily imputed to the God of heaven; for the God of heaven hath given thee, &c. Though most of the ancient eastern histories are lost, yet some fragments remain which speak of this mighty conqueror, and his extended empire. Berossus informs us, that he held in subjection Egypt, Syria, Phœnicia, Arabia, and surpassed all the Chaldeans and Babylonians who reigned before him. Josephus, Philostratus, Megasthenes, and Strabo assert, that he surpassed

even Hercules, proceeded as far as Hercules's pillars, subdued Spain, and led his army thence into Thrace and Pontus. But his empire was of no long duration; for it ended in his grandson Belsazzar, not seventy years after the delivery of this prophecy, nor above twenty-three years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar; which may be the reason why Daniel speaks of him as the only king, "Thou art this head of gold, and after thee shall arise, &c." the rest being to be considered as nothing; nor do we read of any thing good or great performed by them. Bishop Newton, p. 408.

Ver. 40—42. *The fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron, &c.*] This description agrees well with the Roman empire, and the event answered this prediction; for the Roman was vastly more strong and extensive than any of the preceding three. Daniel seems to divide it into three periods. The first is this kingdom, in its strongest and flourishing state, which seems to be denoted by the iron legs: the second is the same kingdom, weakened by the divided state of the empire, denoted by the feet, which were part of potter's clay, and part of iron; for which reason the prophet tells us, *the kingdom shall be divided, though there should be in it something of the strength of iron, because the iron was mixed with the clay:* the third is the same empire, in a yet farther state of declension, denoted by the toes, the extremity of the image; and of consequence the last period of this fourth empire. *As the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken;* that is to say, one part of this divided empire shall remain, and the other part be entirely destroyed. And as the last period of this kingdom is denoted by the toes, this seems to intimate that the remaining part, which was not broken, should be divided into ten distinct kingdoms or governments. Florus, the Roman historian, points out to us this threefold period of the Roman empire, telling us, that it was in its highest strength and glory to the conclusion of the Numantine war, and might be named golden; thence to Marius and Sylla it became like iron; and was at last torn and devoured by the factions of Marius, Sylla, Cæsar, and Pompey. Dr. Chandler's Vind. of Dan. p. 119.

Ver. 43. *They shall mingle themselves, &c.*] They made marriages and alliances one with another, but no hearty union ensued. Reasons of state are stronger than ties of blood;

cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.

44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands,

and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

46 ¶ Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him.

47 The king answered unto Daniel, and

blood; and interest will always avail with governments more than affinity. The Roman empire, therefore, is represented in a double state; first, with the strength of iron, conquering all before it; his *legs of iron*;—and then weakened and divided by the mixture of barbarous nations: *his feet part of iron and part of clay*. See on ver. 33. and Bishop Newton.

Ver. 44. *In the days of these kings*] That is, in the days of some of them. As in the days when the judges ruled, Ruth, i. 1. signifies, "In the days when some of the judges ruled;" so in the days of these kings, signifies, "In the days of some of these kingdoms:" and it must be during the days of the last of them, because they are reckoned four in succession, and consequently this must be the fifth kingdom. Accordingly, the kingdom of Christ was set up during the days of the last of these kingdoms; that is, the Roman. This kingdom was set up by the God of heaven; and hence the phrase, of the kingdom of heaven, came to signify the kingdom of the Messiah; and so it was used and understood by the Jews, and is applied by our Saviour in the New Testament. Other kingdoms were raised by human ambition and worldly power; but this was the work not of man, but of God: this was truly, as it is called, the kingdom of heaven, and John, xviii. 36. a kingdom not of this world; its laws, its powers were all divine. This kingdom was never to be destroyed, as the Babylonian, the Persian, and the Macedonian empires have been, and in great measure also the Roman. This kingdom was not to be left to any other people; it was to be erected by God, in a peculiar manner; to extend itself over all the nations, and still to consist of the same people, without any alteration or change of their name. What this people were to be, and by what name to be called, the prophet expressly declares, ch. vii. 17, 18.—they were to be the saints of the Most High. Of such was this kingdom to consist, and never to depart from them; a character which expressly determines the nature of the kingdom, and by whom it was to be created and governed. This kingdom was to break in pieces, and consume all the kingdoms; to spread and enlarge itself, so that it should comprehend within itself all the former kingdoms. See Bishop Newton, and Dr. Chandler's Defence of Daniel, p. 127.

Ver. 46. *That they should offer an oblation and sweet odours*] Concerning a gift and sweet odours to be offered for him. Houbigant. The king's confession in the next verse, that the God of Daniel was the God of gods, renders it sufficiently clear that he did not command oblations and sacrifices to be made to Daniel as to a god; but he meant that

those things which were necessary for a sacrifice should be brought to Daniel for his use; who possibly had signified, that he designed to return thanks to God in this manner. Houbigant. We may just observe farther, that doing reverence by prostration is not only an act of worship paid to God, but often to kings and great men in the Old Testament, according to the custom of the eastern country. Nebuchadnezzar in the sudden transport of his amazement seems to have looked upon Daniel as having something more than human in him; just as the barbarians thought of St. Paul. See chap. iv. 8. and Acts, xxviii. 6. The author of the *Observations*, in a very long and elaborate note, has vindicated this text. He observes, that Alexander the Great did to the Jewish high-priest what Nebuchadnezzar did to Daniel: that as to the first particular, *prostration*, it certainly, as we have observed, was frequently made use of to prophets and great personages. That as to the second particular, though our translators have made use of the term *oblation*, yet the original word מִנְחָה *minchah*, signifies not only a cake of flour offered to God, but often a present, and that of very different things made to mortal men. See Gen. xliiii. 11. Judg. iii. 15. It is used in like manner to signify the presents made to the prophets of God, where there never has been, nor can be the least jealousy in the world of any idolatrous design, though made by heathen kings. See 2 Kings, viii. 9. It is by no means necessary, therefore, to understand the present of Nebuchadnezzar of an idolatrous oblation, or of any thing more than such a gift as it was becoming a prophet to receive: that as to the third thing, the offering sweet odours to the prophet, it is certain that odours were often made use of in the east merely for civil purposes, and without any idolatrous intention whatsoever; and that they are so still our author proves by a long and curious detail. In fine, Nebuchadnezzar appears in all this matter to have considered Daniel merely as a prophet. His words strongly express this: *Your God is a God of gods*, &c. and had it been otherwise, a person so zealous as Daniel, who ran the risk of his life rather than neglect his homage to God, and who had the courage to pray to him in that dangerous situation with his windows open towards Jerusalem, would undoubtedly, like Paul and Barnabas, have rejected these odours: to suppose, after all this, that they were idolatrous, seems to me almost as perverse as to imagine that the burning of sweet odours at the death of king Aza, 2 Chron. xvi. 14. was the solemnity of an apotheosis. See *Observations*, p. 270.

said, Of a truth *it is*, that your God *is* a God of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer secret.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The date of this prophecy is said to be in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign; but as it appears that Daniel was carried captive in the first, and continued three years under the tuition of the Chaldean sages, this creates a difficulty, which interpreters have variously solved. The most probable way of accounting for it seems to be, that this year was the fourth year from Nebuchadnezzar's being associated with his father in the empire, and the second from his father's death, when he reigned alone; or, *the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar*, commencing from the time when Daniel was appointed to some employment about the king. We have here,

1. The troubled dreams of this mighty monarch. While his meanest subjects slept undisturbed, his agitated mind was harassed with strange imaginations; and the deep impressions made by them dwelt upon his spirit, occasioned vast perplexity in his thoughts, and drove sleep from his eyelids. *Note*; We are apt to envy those who roll in affluence, and live in all the pomp of earthly grandeur; but we know not the pangs which they often feel, and their sleepless hours because of fear in the night.

2. His magicians and astrologers are summoned to shew the dream, and the interpretation thereof; for, though the painful impression of it remained, the particulars were gone from his memory. They instantly attend his orders, with warmest wishes for his prosperity express their high respect for the king, and, requesting the recital of the dream, confidently promise the interpretation thereof. They spoke in the Syriac or Chaldee tongue, which was then the same, however different since; and to the eighth chapter this language is used, that the Chaldeans might read, and be convinced of the folly of their idolatry, and turn to the true God. The request of the magicians seemed modest; but the king insisted upon their telling him the dream itself, on penalty of their utter destruction if they failed, and with a promise of the greatest rewards and honours if they could gratify him herein. In vain they remonstrated upon the impossibility and unreasonableness of the demand; *impossible*, because, as they confess, none but the *gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh*, were capable of such knowledge. They admit the divine omniscience, though, blindly erring, they ascribe that which alone belongs to the one infinite and eternal Jehovah, to their many fictitious deities: *Unreasonable* (as it appeared to them: see the annotations:) because never king before required such a thing from any magician or soothsayer. But their remonstrances exasperate, instead of convincing this despotic monarch; for arbitrary power is deaf to reason. He upbraids them, as if they had combined to impose upon him, and meant only to gain time, till either he should lose the desire of knowing the dream, or be unable to recollect whether what they should advance was true or not; or till his threatening to punish them should be changed: he therefore insists on the immediate satisfaction of his desire, persuaded that, could they tell

the dream, they could not fail of giving the true interpretation also. The magicians repeat their remonstrances, and the king grows more furious: for where passion rages, and obstinacy refuses to listen; reason, however mildly urged, instead of soothing, but exasperates; and where power is with the oppressors, what they cannot support with equity, they will push on with fury. The magicians and wise men are therefore doomed to die without exception; and Daniel and his fellows, though intirely ignorant of the whole transaction, are sought for among the rest to be slain. We may observe here, [1.] What a misery it is to live under an arbitrary government, where neither law nor reason avail any thing against the despotic will of a merciless tyrant. [2.] Though these magicians were now about to suffer unjustly, yet God was righteous, in permitting those to be punished for what they really never pretended to do, in return for their daring to impose on others, by pretending to that which they knew themselves unable to perform.

2dly, When tyrants reign, they will not want instruments to execute their unjust decrees. Already was Arioch gone forth for this bloody work, and Daniel, among the rest, appointed to the slaughter: but God had otherwise ordained; and now when destruction seemed most fearfully to hang over him and his companions, all things were working together for their more distinguished honour and advancement: so little can we judge of good or evil by outward appearances.

Daniel, though before this so famed for his skill, and acknowledged by the king to be ten times wiser than all his sages, had not been consulted or thought of; for passion excludes all deliberate reflection; but his prudence and prayer now warded off the fatal blow which threatened so much mischief.

1. He mildly interrogates the captain on the reason of this hasty decree; and when he learnt the cause, he *went in, or up* unto the king, and humbly begs a short respite, undertaking to give the king all the satisfaction he desired; who now, sensible of his hastiness, or rather wrought upon by the invisible hand of Him who hath the hearts of kings at his disposal, grants the request, and the execution is stayed.

2. No sooner is Daniel retired, than he has recourse in prayer to the God of heaven, who alone could reveal the secret; and he engages his three faithful companions to join in their supplications for the same mercy, in which they were alike interested with himself; since, should the king's decree be put in force, they must perish with the magicians. *Note*; (1.) In every emergency, prayer should be our first resource. (2.) It is good to have praying friends; and our duty to desire, as well as a high privilege to enjoy, an interest in their supplications. (3.) All our hopes of an answer from God arise from faith in his promised mercies; and they who thus draw near to him shall never be disappointed.

3. God heard and answered their requests. He revealed the secret to Daniel in a *night-vision*: either the

48 Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of

Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon.

49 Then Daniel requested of the king, and

following night he dreamed the same dream that Nebuchadnezzar had forgotten, or God revealed it to him, with the interpretation thereof, immediately or soon after the prayer which he had offered. So effectual is the fervent prayer of the righteous, that God will shew them secret things, which others cannot attain to.

4. No sooner is the mercy granted, than his grateful heart overflows with deep acknowledgments. They who pray in faith, are sure to praise with joyful lips. He adores and *blisses* God's great and glorious name for ever and ever; so worthy to be praised, and to be had in everlasting remembrance. [1.] He ascribes to him all *wisdom and might*; *wisdom* infinite to design, and *power* infinite to execute all his purposes. [2.] He acknowledges him as the sovereign disposer of all persons and things. *He changeth the times and the seasons*; all the revolutions of states and kingdoms correspond exactly to his appointing, permissive, or suffering will. *He removeth kings, and setteth up kings*; for he is King of kings, and they and their kingdoms stand or fall at his pleasure. [3.] He is the giver of all wisdom; the greatest politicians and the wisest statesmen are wholly indebted to him for the abilities which they possess; for *he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding*; and where the most enlarged minds must come short, and all human science be at a stand, *he revealeth the deep and secret things*; the mysteries of grace, and secrets of providence, particularly the dream of the king, which none but he could ever declare; for *he knoweth what is in the darkness*, the inmost recesses of men's hearts, the schemes laid with deepest secrecy, and the dreams of darkness, even those that when men awake are fled from their memory; and *the light dwelleth with him*; no darkness conceals from his all-seeing eye, and all divine illuminations flow from him, as rays from the sun. [4.] He particularly adores him for the revelation that he had now given him of his dream: *I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom to understand this secret, and might, or courage, to go in to the king during his fury; and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee*, the revelation and interpretation of the king's dream, which they had sought with their united prayers; *for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter, or word.* Note; (1.) Whatever God bestows upon us, to his glory must it be ascribed. (2.) True humility will make us willing to communicate with our brethren the honour that God puts upon us, and to ascribe our mercies to the efficacy of their prayers, as well as our own, through Jesus Christ.

3dly, No sooner had Daniel returned due thanks to that God who had so graciously answered his prayers, than in haste he applies to Arioch, to be introduced to the king; and, by giving him the satisfaction that he desired with regard to his dream, to prevent the execution of the rash sentence which he had pronounced against his sages. Arioch is eager to bring him to the presence of the monarch, well knowing how acceptable the service would be; and, courtier-like, insinuates, as if he had sought for

an interpreter, when he really only sought for Daniel as his executioner. So ready are the crafty at improving incidents to their own advantage, where, instead of justly claiming merit, they really deserve rebuke.

1. The king hastily interrogates Daniel on the matter; *Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?* which may express either his doubt of his ability, where all the wise men of the court had before confessed their ignorance; or his admiration at the amazing understanding of so young a man; or his eagerness to hear the particulars of that dream which had so deeply affected him.

2. Daniel's answer is most noble, spirited, and pious.

[1.] He seeks to cover the magicians with confusion, and to convince the king of the vanity of trusting on such wretched guides: they deserved not perhaps to be destroyed, but ought at least to be despised. This secret baffled all their rules of art, and shewed how ill-grounded were their pretences to occult science, and the folly of depending upon them. Note; The experience of disappointment should wean us from creature-confidences.

[2.] He would direct the king to the only proper object of his worship and trust, even, *the God in heaven that revealeth secrets*; secrets which all the pretended deities of the Chaldeans could never teach their worshippers, and which human reason never could discover.

[3.] He declares the matter in question to be highly momentous; that the king's dream was from God, and the subject of it relative to the greatest events of futurity, the exaltation and demolition of the successive monarchies of the world, till in the latter day that kingdom should be erected which shall never be destroyed. It should seem as if the king was musing upon the fate of the monarchy which himself had erected, when God in vision shewed him the things that should afterwards come to pass.

[4.] He humbly disclaims all merit, and desires that this discovery may not be ascribed to any superior sagacity in him; but that the praise may be ascribed purely to God, who revealed this secret to him, *for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king*, even for the sake of all the Jewish people, as well as himself and his companions, that they might obtain favour in the sight of the king, whose servants and captives they were; and for the king's sake also, *that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart*, which he was anxious to do, and in which the Lord condescended to gratify him. Note; (1.) Distinguished abilities never appear so admirable, as when accompanied by distinguished humility. (2.) A gracious person desires to disclaim all merit, and to ascribe to God's free grace all the excellence which is in him, and all the good done by him.

4thly, Having prefaced his discourse with such piety and humility, he proceeds to the point, to the king's intense satisfaction. We have,

1. The dream. An image, in a human form, stood before the king; the sculpture admirable, the lustre uncommon: the form tremendous; either its countenance breathed

he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, but Daniel *sat* in the gate of the king, over the affairs of the province of Babylon :

breathed fury, or its colossian size struck the beholder with fear and awe. The head was gold, the breast and arms silver, the belly and thighs brass, the legs iron, the feet part of iron, part of clay. Thus stood the mighty image, till, by an unseen hand, a stone, hewn from the mountain, smote the feet, and suddenly the image fell, dashed in pieces with the stroke, and beaten to dust as *the chaff of the summer threshing-floors*; while the stone, that smote the statue, swelled into a mountain, so vast and huge that it filled the whole earth.

2. The interpretation: in speaking of which he joins his companions with himself, to do them honour, and because it was given partly in answer to their prayers.

[1.] The image represented the successive monarchies of the world. 1. *The head of gold* was the Chaldean monarchy, over which Nebuchadnezzar then presided; his dominion was vast, and he ruled with most despotic sway; but all his power, greatness, and glory, were given or permitted by the overruling hand of God. Though he was a *King of kings*, he was but the minister of *the God of heaven*, who had given into his hand the kingdoms of the world, and to whom he was accountable; and of this the highest of the sons of men should be ever reminded. This monarchy was to be transmitted to his son Evil-merodach, and his son's son Belshazzar, till the expiration of the seventy years prophesied of by Jeremiah, xxv. 9—11. xxvii. 5—7.—2. *The breast and arms of silver* signified the kingdom of the Medes and Persians, inferior to the former, as silver is less precious than gold; for, though at first their dominions were as extensive, they quickly declined from the summit of grandeur. This monarchy was founded by Cyrus, whose father was a Persian, his mother a Mede, the *two arms* which met in him, and lasted, according to the computation of some, 130 years; though others extend it to 204 years. 3. The third kingdom, represented by the belly and thighs of brass, was the Grecian monarchy under Alexander, who subdued the last Medo-Persian king Darius Codomannus, and bore *rule over all the earth*, weeping, it is said, that he had not more worlds to conquer. After his decease his dominions were divided, and chiefly possessed by two of his successors, whose descendants, the Seleucidæ and Lagidæ, who reigned in Egypt and Syria, are the thighs of brass.

4. The fourth monarchy is the Roman, signified by the legs of iron, and the feet of iron and clay. Strong as iron, their armies broke in pieces the Grecian empire, and subdued most of the nations in the then known world; and the Jewish people especially felt their terrible fury: but, in process of time, this monarchy declined from its former splendour, and became broken and divided into ten different kingdoms by the irruptions of the Goths and Vandals; like the feet and toes, part of iron and part of clay, some of these states, which rose out of the ruins of the empire, retaining much of the strength of the iron, whilst others were weak as miry clay: and though *they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men*, the barbarous nations which broke in upon them, or endeavour to cement the divided kingdoms by intermarriages and alli-

ances, yet the attempt will be as fruitless as to mix iron and clay together, the jarring interests and ambition of the several states preventing their cordial union, and inducing them to weaken and destroy each other.

[2.] The stone, hewn out of the mountain without hands, prefigured the kingdom of the divine Messiah, not supported by human power, or promoted by human policy; but by the invisible agency of the eternal Spirit established beyond the malice of every enemy, and enduring for ever and ever. The God of heaven himself more immediately sets up this kingdom, of which his own Son is the glorious head. It arose in the days of those kings who reigned during the last monarchy of the four, Christ being born under the reign of Augustus: and as it then began to spread, and has continued to this day, so shall it be still wider and farther extended, till all the opposing powers of earth are broken, and every enemy shall bow before it: a kingdom this, which shall not, as the former monarchies, be transferred from one people to another; but shall endure not only through the days of time, but be coeval with the ages of eternity.

Thus having declared the dream, with the interpretation, to the fullest satisfaction of the king, he closes with an assurance of the divine original of the dream, as coming from that great God who only can foresee and foretel future events, and compared with whom the gods of the nations are less than nothing, and vanity. His word is truth, and therefore the events here predicted will assuredly be fulfilled in their season. *The dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.*

5thly, We have,

1. This mighty king prostrate before the prophet. He was overwhelmed with wonder and awe at what he heard; and, as if a divinity had spoken, (for no other, he supposes, could reveal such hidden things of futurity,) he falls down to worship his captive, and, as many suppose, commands divine honours to be paid him; which, though no doubt Daniel utterly rejected, (if they were really divine honours,) sufficiently testified the high apprehensions that the king entertained of his surpassing excellence. See the annotations.

2. He ascribes the highest honour to the God of Daniel, acknowledging his incomparable glory and greatness, as the *God of gods*, infinitely superior to all others; *the Lord of kings*, setting them up and removing them at his pleasure; and a *revealer of secrets* which none besides could ever have known.

3. He advanced Daniel to the highest post of honour; loaded him with gifts; made him governor of Babylon, the metropolis of the empire; placed him at the head of all the wise men, and kept him in his court, probably as his prime minister. Nor were his companions forgotten; but, at his request, they were raised to the dignity of chief rulers in the province of Babylon. *Note*; (1.) They whom the Providence of God advances, should not forget their old friends. (2.) It is a supreme blessing and happiness, for any nation, when men of eminent abilities, joined with distinguished piety, are put in trust with the administration of affairs.

CHAP. III.

Nebuchadnezzar dedicateth a golden image in Dura. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego are accused for not worshipping the image. They, being threatened, make a good confession. God delivereth them out of the furnace. Nebuchadnezzar, seeing the miracle, bleisseth God.

[Before Christ 587.]

NEBUCHADNEZZAR the king made an image of gold, whose height *was* threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

2 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of

the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

3 Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

4 Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages,

5 *That* at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up:

CHAP. III.

THIS chapter contains a history of Nebuchadnezzar's erecting an image of gold of an immense size, as an idol to which he expected all his empire to pay worship. Daniel's three friends, refusing this worship, are cast into a furnace of fire, and by their miraculous delivery thence the king is again brought to an acknowledgment of the one true God.

How soon this image was erected after the dream in his second year is uncertain. Some of the ancient versions begin this chapter with "In the eighteenth year," and Dr. Prideaux agrees with them, though the words are not in the present text: but whether it happened then, or as some think, later, the design of it probably was to frustrate the exposition, and defeat the end of the dream; on which account perhaps the image was made wholly of gold, and not of different metals; to make an ostentatious display of the abundance of his wealth, and to obviate the jealousies of his people on account of his favours to Daniel and his friends. Some or all of these motives might probably influence this haughty and inconstant monarch to desert the true God, whom he had so lately acknowledged, and to yield again to the force of those inveterate habits, from which he had been so miraculously recovered.

This statue is thought to have been hollow within, like the Colossus at Rhodes, whose height exceeded that of the statue by ten cubits: the proportion of the height seems unequal to the breadth, unless the pedestal be included therein on which it was placed. Houbigant, on account of this disparity, thinks it was rather a column or pyramid than of the human form: but Diodorus, lib. ii. sect. 9. tells us, that Xerxes took away an image of gold forty feet long, when he demolished the temple of Belus in Babylon, which Prideaux supposes may have been this of Nebuchadnezzar. The statue of Jupiter also made by Lysippus at Tarentum is said to be forty cubits. The plain of Dura where it was erected was probably near a town called by Symmachus Dourau, and by Ptolemy Doraba; "Amianus Marcellinus mentions Dura as not far from the place where Julian died; and in D'Anville's map of the

"Tigris and Euphrates it is on the Tigris, under 34½ lat. "and in Niebuhr's map of his journey (45 of vol. ii.) is "Dor." Michaelis. But Jerom considers it as an inclosed place in Babylon, see chap. i. 2. and the LXX has περιβολον, considering it as an appellative for a sort of circus.

Ver. 1. Nebuchadnezzar—made an image of gold] But what did this image or statue represent? Grotius insists that it was the *statue* of Nabopalassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, whom this prince chose to rank with the gods. Others think that Nebuchadnezzar erected his own statue, and intended to be adored under this form. But throughout the whole chapter, Nebuchadnezzar, in speaking to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, no where complains of injury done to his person, or statue; but only that the companions of Daniel do not worship his gods, nor the statue erected by his orders. And in chap. iv. 8. he says, that the name of Belteshazzar is composed of the name of his god, and *Bel* was certainly the most celebrated deity of that country. It was to this god, therefore, that the statue in question was certainly consecrated. It was toward the end of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar that this event happened; for in the decree, the beginning of which we read in the end of this chapter, and to which this miracle gave occasion, the prince recounts the dream, which had been explained to him by Daniel. See chap. iv. 4, &c. He there describes in what manner he was reduced to the state of beasts, driven from his palace, and afterwards re-established on his throne; all which happened in the last years of his reign. See Calmet.

Ver. 5. Harp] The original word is קיתרוס *citharus*, which seems to be denominated from the *citron-tree*, the product of Armenia, Media, and Persia; the tree itself might take its name from the ground in which it flourished, or from the round figure of its fruit: for קתר *ceter*, signifies a *rock* in the Chaldee (Prov. xxx. 26.), and mountainous or rocky places are called *cythera*, and *sitharon*. *Citra* is likewise Chaldee for a *crown*, turban, or diadem of the head, and is the proper name for the Persian diadem, which the Greeks write Κίτταρος [*cittarus*], Κιδάρις [*cidaris*],

6 And whoſo falleth not down and worſhippeth ſhall the ſame hour be caſt into the miſt of a burning fiery furnace.

7 Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the ſound of the cornet, flute, harp, ſackbut, pſaltery, and all kinds of muſick,

[*citaris*], and *Κιτταρις* [*cittaris*.] An instrument ſhaped in the like orbicular form, might for the ſame reaſon be called *citerius*; and this we are told was the original form of the *harp*; or elſe, the matter of which it was made gave its name, as it did to many other instruments in all nations. The modern Perſian affords us another derivation: *Ciar-tar* is their name for a lyre; *ciar* ſignifying *four*, and *tar* a *ſtring*, from the four chords with which it is ſtrung; and as the ancients made uſe of ſuch a lyre, ſo by giving little or no ſound to the R it might of old be pronounced like *citbara*. See Biſhop Chandler, *Vind. of Def.* vol. i. p. 50.

[*Sackbut*] The Hebrew word is *סבבא* *ſabca*, whence the Greek word *σαμβουμ*. Euphorion mentions this instrument as very ancient. The ſtate of one of the muſes, erected at Mitylene in Lesbos, has a *ſambuca* in her hand. It is mentioned as a foreign invention in Ariſtoſenus and Strabo; is expreſſly ſaid to be the diſcovery of the Syrians, and was in uſe among the Parthians and Troglodytes. The name is Syriac or Chaldee, and comes from *סבך* *ſabach*, which ſignifies to *twiſt* or *plait*: and it is applied to trees which bear thick branches, and to a military battering engine, worked by a variety of ropes; and for the ſame reaſon, to a muſical instrument made of the wood of ſuch trees, or thickly ſtrung with chords. The *ſabek-tree* is mentioned in the Septuagint verſion of Gen. xxii. 13. which Voſſius takes to be the Syriac or Egyptian *jeſſamin*, called *zabach* and *ſambach* by the Syrians and Arabs to this day. In other parts *ſambucus* is the name of the *alder*. Of ſuch light and brittle wood muſical instruments were compoſed, and therefore we need ſearch no farther for the original of this name. However, it may be noted, that *ſamma* and *buc* are Indian or Perſian words for certain instruments of muſic; and anciently thoſe tongues were the ſame with thoſe which were ſpoken by the Medes and Armenians. See Biſhop Chandler, as above, p. 51.

[*Pſaltery*] The Hebrew word *פסנתרין* is *pfanterin*, and the Greek *pfalterion*. They who invented the instrument undoubtedly impoſed the name which it bears; for wherever we can trace the one, we may aſcribe the other. Now it is acknowledged by the Greeks, that it was more ancient than Terpander; that it was barbarous or foreign; that it abounded with many ſtrings, and was the ſame with the old *magadis*, *pectys*, and *trigonum*, which were many ſtrung, and of a triangular form, of which the Greeks did not aſſume the invention; and that there was in Perſia (in which Media and Armenia are generally included) a *pectys* and *magadis*, whoſe ſtrings hung on both ſides of the wood, and which was touched with both hands, as our harps are. Hence we may ſafely infer, that the invention and name are to be derived from the Eaſt. We have ſuch accounts of the ſplendour and politeneſs of the Median court, that we may reaſonably ſuppoſe that both the instrument and its name had their original in that country, and were borrowed of them by the Babylonians and Greeks. This will appear more evident from the termination of the original, *pfanter*, for old Perſic ſubſtantives commonly end in *ter*.

And as *in* is added in the modern Perſian to heighten the ſenſe of adjectives in the ſuperlative degree; ſo *in* is a Syriac or Babylonian plural, which the Chaldees might ſubjoin to the foreign name of this instrument, the better to expreſs the ſounding of the ſtrings of both ſides of this instrument at once, with both the hands of the performer. *Pſanter* may be derived from the Chaldee or Syriac *פפב* *peſb*, or *פפבב* *peſbeſb*, which ſignifies *beating*, *impelling*, *puſhing*, or *touching with the fingers*. In the Chaldee, a word which primarily ſignifies *pulſations* or *beating*, is applied to muſical instruments in general; and the Jews called *neginoth*, in the plural, one kind of ſtringed instruments which was more than ordinarily *ſtruck* and *moved* in various parts; and which is therefore rendered by the LXX a *pſaltery*. *Pſanterin* then, if it be not a neutral ſuperlative uſed ſubſtantively in the Perſian or Median tongue, to ſignify an instrument of all others the *moſt touched*, may be a Median word, to which in Babylon they added a Syriac plural, to expreſs, as in the form of *neginoth*, the frequent and *double pulſations thereof*. Such a root is to be found at preſent among the Perſians. *Biſhana*, or, as it may be ſpoken, *pfana*, is the *percuffion of a harp* in Perſic, and the verb has the ſenſe of *making an impreſſion on the nerves*. Biſhop Chandler, p. 53, &c.

[*Dulcimer*] The original word is *סומפניא* *ſumponiab*, and the Greek *συμφωνια* *ſymphonia*; but the ſignification in the Chaldee and in the Greek is different. The Greek is a compound word, which ſignifies a *concert*, or harmony of many instruments; whereas the word here, is a ſimple name of one ſingle instrument, upon which different parts of muſic were played: and the ſtringed instruments came originally from the Eaſt, probably ſome Grecian might add a greater number of ſtrings or chords, to give a greater compaſs or variety of muſic, which being called *ſymphonia* in Greek, and introduced into the Chaldee and Perſian courts, might poſſibly have retained its Grecian name; though this is by no means certain. As to the particular instrument intended by the name, we cannot be poſitive. A pipe perforated with many holes was called a *ſymphony* in the Jeruſalem tongue; and a bladder with pipes in it (now called a *bag-pipe*) had the like name in the language of the Moors, which they left behind them in Spain. The Moors in Africa called a little drum, hollow in the middle, and covered on one ſide with a ſkin, a *ſymphony*; which name might as juſtly be given to one kind of *harp* or *fiddle*, which was made, according to St. Auguſtin, of a concave piece of wood, like a drum. For all agree that the reaſon of calling ſo many things by the ſame name, ſeems to be their cavity. The learned Henry Michaelis derives the word from the Hebrew *ספן* *ſaphan*, which ſignifies to *conceal*, or to *cover in a hollow form*. Hence *ספינה* *ſepbina* is put for a *ſhip*, Jonah, i. 5. or the *bold*, or *capacious part* of it, agreeable to the tranſlation of the LXX. *Symphony* might poſſibly come from *ספא* *ſpap*, which carries the idea of *cavity* to all its derivatives. Thus *ספ* *ſaph* or *ſupb*, (the original of the Greek word *ſcyphus*,) ſignifies a *cup* or *bowl*, in the Hebrew or Chaldee. *סוף* *Supb* is the

all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down *and* worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

8 ¶ Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews.

9 They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever.

10 Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, shall fall down and worship the golden image :

11 And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, *that* he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

12 There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego ; these men, O king, have not regarded thee : they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

13 ¶ Then Nebuchadnezzar in *bis* rage and

fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Then they brought these men before the king.

14 Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, *Is it true*, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up ?

15 Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made ; *well* : but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace ; and who *is* that God that shall deliver you out of my hands ?

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we *are* not careful to answer thee in this matter.

17 If it be *so*, our God, whom we serve, is

the name of a *reed* or *came*, from the tube in the middle of it ; (see Exod. ii. 3.) and *siph* is used for the shank of a candlestick, and for the middle part of pillars, placed before the portal or threshold of great houses, as well as for the *entrance* or gate itself ; for these ornamental pillars were probably *hollow*, like the two great ones in the porch of Solomon's temple. *N*, as *simpulum*, a cup used in sacrifices, is confessedly derived from the Hebrew *siph* or *saph* ; so, by the like analogy, *symphony*, or *symphonia*, may, when applied to any hollow instrument composed of boards, or of wood otherwise excavated. It is the genius of the eastern tongues to increase syllables at the end of words, as new ideas are added to their primitive significations ; and as syllables are increased in words which have two radicals following each other of the same letter, the first letter is commonly dropped, and the last is supplied by a certain mark on the next, which the Chaldees almost constantly change into the letter *N*, and almost as often liquidate into *M*, when the compensative *N* goes before the letters *BMP*. Thus, instead of *siphonia*, as the word is written in some copies, ver. 10. the Chaldees would find it *symphonia* ; but for facility and gracefulness of speaking, they soften it into *symphonia*, because of the *P* which immediately follows. See Bishop Chandler, Vind. p. 45. and Dr. Chandler's Defence, p. 15.

Ver. 6. *The same hour*] This is the first place in the Old Testament, where we meet with the division of time into *hours*. The Greeks ascribe the invention of them to Anaximander, who perhaps received it from the Chaldees. The mode of punishment here mentioned was common among this people. Compare Jer. xxix. 22. It has been said that Abraham was exposed to this punishment before his departure from Chaldea. See Calmet.

Ver. 11. *Burning fiery furnace*] Another cruel method of punishment among the Chaldeans ; see Jer. xxix. 22. Burning alive is still inflicted, as Shaw tells us, on Jews and Christians, for capital crimes ; at Algiers : see also Pfal. xxi. 9. Mr. Bruce, vol. i. p. 516. has given us the following narrative : " Phineas, an Arabian prince from Medina, having beat St. Aretas, the governor of Najiran, began to persecute the Christians by a new species of cruelty, by ordering certain furnaces or pits full of fire to be prepared, into which he threw as many of the inhabitants of Najiran as refused to renounce Christianity. Mohammed, in his Koran, mentions this tyrant by the name of the Master of the fiery pits, without either condemning or praising the execution ; only saying, the sufferers shall witness against him at the last day."

Ver. 2. *They serve not thy gods*] *Gods* in general ; not *one god*, represented by the golden statue. The statue, says Houbigant, in agreement with Calmet, was not of a human form, as is plain from its proportions ; for it was ten times higher than broad. However, whatever form it had, whether of a column or a pyramid, many gods might possibly be exhibited hieroglyphically.

Ver. 13. *Then they*] *And they*.

Ver. 15. *And who is that god, &c.*] This is a proof of the inattention and inconstancy of this prince, who had so often proved and known the sovereign power and superiority of the God of the Jews. See chap. ii. 47. The Jews answer him with great firmness, telling him that it so plain a case, there is no room for deliberation ; they had an answer ready at hand, that *they ought to obey God rather than man*. See Lowth and Calmet.

Ver. 17. *If it be so*] *Behold. There is a God whom we worship, who is able to snatch us from the furnace of burning fire,*

able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

18 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

19 ¶ Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.

20 And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.

21 Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

22 Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding

hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

24 ¶ Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.

25 He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego came forth of the midst of the fire.

fire, and to deliver us from thy hand, O king. Houbigant. "As we are firmly persuaded of his power to deliver us, so we trust in his mercy and goodness that he will do so." They speak this out of a well-grounded hope, not from a certain foresight of being delivered; for such an absolute certainty would have destroyed the virtue of their faith and constancy in despising the danger which threatened them. See Lowth.

Ver. 20. *The most mighty men*] His guards; whom he employed, according to the ancient custom, to execute criminals.

Ver. 21. *Their hats*] *Their turbans*. As to the particulars of the dress of these young men, the first word seems to mean their principal garment, which hung loose and flowing down to their ancles, perhaps not unlike the Roman tunick; and Montfaucon in his *Antiq.* vol. iii. tells us, that the Babylonians, according to Herodotus, wore two tunicks, one linen, which fell down as low as their feet, and the other woollen, which they wore uppermost; upon these they also wore a Chlanidion, or kind of small cloak. The second word signifies a sort of hat or bonnet, which had for the most part brims or margins, but narrower than those of our modern hats. The third term, according to the versions, must mean their hose or high shoes; but I rather think, with some commentators, a hood or cloak may be intended, that hung down from the head over the shoulders, not unlike the Roman pallium, and of which sort probably was our Saviour's cloak, John, xix. 23. Shaw tells us, that the mountain Arabs or Kabyles, who retain the primitive manners, have a cloak called a Bur-

noose, which seems to answer to this latter; and they have also an upper garment called Hyke, which may not much disagree with the former: "This last garment (he says) was six yards long, and five or six feet broad, and served for a complete dress in the day, and for a covering at night." The last word, being a general term for vestments of all sorts, may be supposed to comprehend their under garments, and all that are not recited before. Xenophon has given us an actual exhibition in the person of Cyrus of each of the parts of dress here before us, in his eighth book of the *Cyropædia*, p. 460. Edit. Hutch.

Ver. 22. *Therefore because*] *And forasmuch as*.

Ver. 23. *And these three men—fell down, &c.*] Houbigant inserts between the 23d and 24th verses two verses which are found in the Vulgate to this purpose: "But an angel of the Lord descended to Azariah and his companions into the furnace, and drove the flame of fire from the furnace, and they walked in the midst of the flame, praising and blessing the Lord." The LXX and Arabic read the beginning of the 24th verse thus; *Then Nebuchadnezzar heard them singing praise, and was astonished, &c.* The Vulgate and several other of the versions, introduce after the 23d verse, *The Song of the Three Children*, found in the Apocrypha, which is not found in the Hebrew.

Ver. 25. *Is like the Son of God*] Rather like a Son of God, or of the gods: in agreement with the Hebrew, LXX, and Syriac; that is to say, "Like a divine and glorious person, sent from the powers above to rescue and deliver these men." For, as Nebuchadnezzar was an idolater, it is scarcely to be conceived that he should know any thing concerning the Son of God, the *Messiah*, and much less of his

27 And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.

28 *Then* Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded

their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

29 Therefore, I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in pieces; and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other god than can deliver after this sort.

30 ¶ Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in the province of Babylon.

his *form* and likeness: whereas all the heathens had a notion, which runs through their theology, of the *sons of the deities*, as powerful beings sent often to the aid and protection of mankind. But though we can scarcely suppose Nebuchadnezzar to have called, or known this person to have been the *Son of God*, the promised Redeemer; yet it is extremely probable, (and so the best Jewish, as well as Christian commentators have understood it,) that he was indeed *The Son of God*, who often appeared in our nature, in a human form, before he assumed that nature for our salvation;—the great *angel* or *messenger* of the covenant, who under that character frequently revealed himself to the patriarchs of old: and accordingly in the 28th verse he is called *the Angel of God*; the messenger sent to deliver these servants of the Lord;—the same who afterwards sent to Daniel to preserve him from the rage of the lions. Moreover we may observe, that as angels are often called *sons of God*, and as most nations had high ideas of their power, perhaps Nebuchadnezzar might only mean an *angel*, a celestial delegate; and this seems the more probable from his own words, ver. 28. *Blessed be God, who hath sent his angel,—that angel or son of God, whom I saw in the furnace, &c.*

Ver. 27. The fire had no power] The several expressions here used are meant to shew, that not the least injury was received from the fire. The expressions rise in fine order, and the climax is beautiful. The fire not only had no prevailing power over their bodies, but neither was a hair of their head burnt, nor their flowing robes singed, nor even the smell of fire had passed on them. Compare this with *Isai. xliiii. 2.*

Ver. 30. Then the king promoted Shadrach, &c.] Or, "Restored them to their former places and dignities," according to the force of the original word. The LXX add at the end of the verse, *And he advanced them to be governors over all the Jews who were in his kingdom.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The king had, as we read in the former chapter, made a noble confession of the glory of Daniel's God; but the conviction is soon forgotten, and his attachment to idolatry prevails: and, as we too often see the dog return to his vomit again,

1. He erects a golden image of immense size, thirty yards high or upwards. At what time, or on what occasion, this was done, is not said.

2. A general summons is sent to all the magistrates, governors, and officers, civil, military, and religious, throughout his vast empire, to attend the dedication of this image; who instantly assembled, ready to obey the king's injunction.

3. A proclamation is made to all the vast assembly of the king's pleasure, that the moment they heard the burst of instruments of music collected on that occasion, to celebrate the praises of their deity, they should unanimously prostrate themselves before him, on penalty, in case of refusal, of being cast into a burning fiery furnace. Thus has the devil prepared every engine to seduce or compel the sinner into his service, both the soft blandishments of sense to allure, and fearful punishments threatened to extort a compliance.

4. All testified a ready submission. No sooner was the signal given than the adoring assembly are prostrate on the plain. When it is dangerous to be singular, and pleasure invites, few will hesitate about the consequences of yielding to the temptation.

2dly, We have,

1. The malicious accusation brought against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, for disobedience to the king's command. Instead of complying with such gross idolatry, they had resolved to endure any torments rather than commit so great a crime. Many had, no doubt, envied their advancement, and gladly embraced this occasion to ruin them. They therefore, with warmest wishes for his prosperity, address the king, as his most faithful and loyal subjects, who had the honour of his government most at heart, remind him of the decree that he had issued, and inform him of the disregard paid to it by these three men; a crime, they insinuate, aggravated by their ingratitude herein shewn for the favours which they had received, in being raised from captives to the highest posts of the state, and which, should they be overlooked in this their contempt of the king's commands, would reflect dishonour on his government, be of the worst consequence to the kingdom, and have a bad influence on the people. Daniel is not mentioned: it should seem he was absent, or too high in the king's favour to be meddled with.

2. The king, exasperated at the information, in a rage commands these men to be seized, and brought into his presence. With fury sparkling in his eyes, and terror in his voice, he demands of them an answer to the accusation, whether

CHAP. IV.

Nebuchadnezzar confesseth God's kingdom, and maketh relation of his dream, which the magicians could not interpret. Daniel heareth the dream: he intrepeth it. The history of the event.

[Before Christ 570.]

NEBUCHADNEZZAR the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that

dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied unto you.

2 I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me.

3 How great *are* his signs! and how mighty *are* his wonders! his kingdom *is* an everlasting

whether it was true; or, as the words may be rendered, *Is it of purpose* that you have done this, contumaciously, in defiance of my authority and in contempt of my gods? Once more he offers to prove them; if they will now comply to worship the golden image, all shall be well; if not, the furnace is ready, and they shall instantly be cast into the flames, from which he defies their God to save them. A dire alternative! to bow or burn. How thankful ought we to be, that we are not driven to this trying proof of our constancy; and that the fires, once kindled by popish idolaters in this land for the like purpose, are now extinguished!

3. With unshaken fortitude and sedateness of mind, they mildly unite in their reply, not reproaching him as tyrannical, but meekly resigning themselves up to God in the way of duty, and with deliberate courage determined to abide by their resolution, whatever the consequence might be. They seek no evasion, ask for no respite; for, where duty is plain, to deliberate is sinful, and to parley the prelude of compliance with the temptation. *O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.* Carnal reason indeed might have suggested a thousand palliatives to excuse the sin; but, where God's commandment was so express, these gracious souls could not hesitate a moment whether they should obey God or man. They want no time to word their answer. They cannot, dare not, do it. Their lives were dear to them; but death, with all its terrors, cannot shake their steady souls: they are content by faith to commit their lives to his care who gave them, and can preserve them, if he pleases, in the burning fiery furnace, or deliver them from it. However, whether God was pleased miraculously to interpose for them or not, their purpose is fixed; they will not serve his gods nor worship his image. *Note;* (1.) In the way of duty we must never be *careful* about consequences. (2.) If we have true faith in God, it will cast out enslaving fear, and enable us in the day of trial to commit our all into his hand, confident that he will support us under our sufferings, or deliver us out of them. (3.) The way to be ready for the severest conflicts is daily to deny ourselves. They who first refused to eat of the king's meat, were now enabled to refuse to worship his gods.

3dly, An answer so firm, and yet withal so sedate, might have been expected to have wrought some relentings in the tyrant's mind, especially after the confessions that himself had made of the glory of that God to whom they so faithfully adhered: but we see that it was quite otherwise.

1. The monarch, exasperated, with fury in his looks, like a fiend of darkness, as if the furnace should be the emblem of the rage with which his bosom burned, commanded it to be heated seven times hotter than usual;

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which, if his passion would have admitted of deliberation, he must have seen would be a favour, instead of an aggravation of the punishment, and serve but the sooner to dispatch these martyrs for the truth; but God over-ruled the tyrant's rage, to make his own glory more illustrious in their deliverance. In haste they are hurried to the flames, caught up, as they stood, in their clothes, bound by the mightiest men of Nebuchadnezzar's army, and cast into the fiery furnace; which, being so intensely heated, and the urgency of the king's command hurrying the men who bore them too near the mouth, the flame instantly slew them. A righteous judgment, it should seem, upon them who were the ready instruments of this tyrant's cruelty, and probably the very persons who had lodged the accusation against these children of the Most High. *Note;* (1.) Could men see their own countenances, when rage foams between their lips and flashes from their eyes, they would startle at themselves as devils in a human form. (2.) Terrible was this furnace: we cannot look into it without horror: yet here a moment would end the martyr's sufferings: but there is a fiercer fire kindled for sinners in hell, which tortures eternally, where death brings no relief, but the smoke of the torment ascendeth for ever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night. (3.) Persecutors of God's people may expect that he will avenge their wrongs.

2. God is pleased astonishingly to interpose for the rescue of his faithful servants. Struck with terror and astonishment at the death of his mighty warriors, the king hastily arose; and how great his surprise, when, in the midst of that furnace where the objects of his rage had fallen bound, he beholds four persons loose, walking unhurt in the midst of the flames! He calls his counsellors, asks them concerning the order for the execution of these men, and they declare it was punctually executed. He looks attentively on the sight: three of the persons are well known to him; the fourth he conceived to be like some heavenly messenger, a *son of God*; either one of the angelic host, or, which possibly he might have heard from Daniel, that uncreated angel of the covenant the Lord Christ, who had of old so often appeared to his people in a human form. Approaching then the mouth of the furnace, with high respect he now addresses those servants of the most high God whom he had treated so cruelly, and invites them by name to come forth: nor did they delay to obey him; and, to the astonishment of all those princes and governors who surrounded the king, walked out of the midst of the fire, with not a hair singed; nor so much as the smell of fire arising from them or their garments. *Note;* (1.) The afflictions into which God's faithful people are cast, resemble this furnace: far from being able to hurt

3 F

them;

kingdom, and his dominion *is* from generation to generation.

4 ¶ I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace :

5 I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me.

6 Therefore made I a decree to bring in all the wise *men* of Babylon before me, that they might make known unto me the interpretation of the dream.

7 Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers :

and I told the dream before them ; but they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof.

8 ¶ But at the last Daniel came in before me, whose name *was* Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom *is* the spirit of the holy gods : and before him I told the dream, *saying*,

9 O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods *is* in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof.

them, they only consume the cords of corruption which fettered them, and set them more at liberty to walk with God ; and the presence of Jesus in the midst of them not only prevents their trials from being painful, but enables them to count them all joy. (2.) They who are enabled confidently to trust in God, often experience wonderful deliverances. (3.) God will make those proud men, who have persecuted his people, bow at their feet, and know that he hath loved them. (4.) Every saved sinner comes into the presence of the eternal King, as these three worthies, *a brand plucked out of the burning*.

4thly, Struck with deep conviction by what he had beheld,

1. This mighty monarch adores the power and grace of that glorious God, whose wondrous interposition appeared in the deliverance of these his faithful servants. It now was evident, that no other god could deliver as he had done, and that his care and kindness never deserted those who steadily adhered to him in the hour of trial. Thus can God change the voice even of persecutors, and teach blasphemers to bleis and praise.

2. He commends the courage and constancy of these three worthies, who dared contradict a king armed with fury, and, with a noble contempt of life, resolved to cleave to their own God, in the face of a fiery furnace, committing themselves with unshaken confidence into his hands. *Note* ; (1.) A steady adherence to the cause of God and truth will often extort approbation even from enemies, while they who meanly desert their principles will only render themselves despicable even in the eyes of those who seduced them. (2.) When sin or death must be the alternative, we may emphatically say, *to die is gain*. (3.) They who are enabled to trust God, will assuredly prove true to him.

3. He issues an edict, forbidding, on the severest penalties, any of his subjects to speak *any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego*. As the Chaldeans had taken the Jews captives, they probably thought and spoke contemptuously and blasphemously of their God ; which must have grieved exceedingly the faithful in Babylon : but now, though they are not converts to his worship, they are taught to think highly of his glory ; since, by the confession of their king, none of their gods, not even their admired Bel, could deliver after this manner. *Note* ; It is a mercy when the lips of adversaries are sealed up with

conviction, though their hearts may be as far as ever from true conversion.

4. He highly promoted these three men in the province of Babylon : so that they received a present reward of their fidelity. For sometimes God gives in this world, to those who dare hazard all for his sake, *an hundred fold, and in the world to come life everlasting*.

CHAP. IV.

THIS chapter contains a decree of king Nebuchadnezzar's, and the reasons of it ; the king had again dreamed, and was at a loss for the meaning of his dream. Daniel interprets it of the deprivation and recovery of his royal authority : after the completion, the king acknowledges the truth of the events, and praises and extols the God of heaven. There is a change of persons in the chapter, which may require some little attention to prevent ambiguity. The decree and the history are delivered in the words of Nebuchadnezzar ; the interpretation of the dream in the words of Daniel, and the completion or conclusion again in the words of the king.

Ver. 1. Nebuchadnezzar the king] This is an edict in favour of the Jews : Daniel has preserved it to us in the original language, as an authentic piece. It is probable that it was given upon the occasion, and in consequence of the deliverance of the three Hebrews from the furnace.

Ver. 3. How great are his signs, &c.] The king's repeated experience had extorted from him the sublime confession contained in this verse ; the latter part of which is a fine display of the infinite power and dominion of the true God.

Ver. 4. I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest, &c.] Nebuchadnezzar, after having subjected to his empire Syria, Phœnicia, Judæa, Egypt, and Arabia, returned to Babylon, full of glory ; and, inflated with this prosperity, he enjoyed in peace the fruit of his conquests ; seeing nothing in all Asia which did not submit to his authority, till God troubled his repose by the uneasy dream which he sent him. See Calmet.

Ver. 8. Whose name was] *Whose name is*.

Ver. 9. Master of the magicians] Or, *chief of the diviners*. Nebuchadnezzar gave this place and rank to Daniel, after he had interpreted his first dream to him concerning the statue. Instead of *troubleth thee*, we may read, *too hard for thee*.

10 Thus *were* the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof *was* great.

11 The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth:

12 The leaves thereof *were* fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it *was* meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it.

13 I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven;

14 He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches:

15 Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and *let* his portion *be* with the beasts in the grass of the earth:

16 Let his heart be changed from man's,

and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him.

17 This matter *is* by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.

18 This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise *men* of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou *art* able; for the spirit of the holy gods *is* in thee.

19 ¶ Then Daniel, whose name *was* Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. The king spake, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered, and said, My lord, the dream *be* to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies.

20 The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto

thee. Houbigant, for tell me the visions of my dream, &c. reads, attend to the dream which I have seen, and declare its interpretation.

Ver. 10. Behold, a tree, &c.] Princes and great men are frequently represented in Scripture under the metaphor of fair and flourishing trees. See Ezek. xxxi. 3. Jer. xxii. 15. Psal. xxxvii. 35. The whole of this allegorical dream is explained in the subsequent part of the chapter.

Ver. 13. A watcher] Instead of *watcher*, Houbigant reads, *an adversary*, or *opponent*; which he thinks answers much better to the character of the *angel* here spoken of, as the avenger and punisher of Nebuchadnezzar's pride. According to our translation, we must understand the word as referring to the attendance of the evangelical orders upon God's throne, to receive and execute his commands. Hence they are called the *eyes of the Lord*.

Ver. 16. Let his heart be changed from man's] It can only be hence collected, that the king's mind was so changed, that he now appeared to himself no longer as a man, but as an animal; and therefore, of his own accord, lived among wild beasts, neglectful of human food and culture. Nothing is read concerning the change of his form; he therefore crept upon his hands and feet like other animals; in this alone unlike a man, that his hair and nails increased like those of an eagle: see ver. 33. By *seven times* are meant *seven years*. *Times* is used in the same sense in the *Revelation*. Scaliger thinks that this madness

of Nebuchadnezzar is obscurely hinted at in a fragment of Abydenus, produced by Eusebius; wherein, having represented the king, from the Chaldean writers, to have fallen into an ecstasy, and to have foretold the destruction of that empire by the Medes and Persians, the author adds, that immediately after uttering this prophecy he disappeared; which Scaliger expounds by the king's being driven from his regal state, and the society of men. See Houbigant and Calmet.

Ver. 17. This matter is by the decree, &c.] It is called, in the 24th verse, *the decree of the Most High*. The expression in the text is an allusion to the proceedings of earthly princes, who publish their decrees by the advice of their chief ministers. *Watchers* and *holy ones* are here spoken of in the plural number; whereas the words in the 13th verse are in the singular: which difference may be thus accounted for, that the sentence was pronounced at the joint request of many, but was to be put in execution by one angel only. The *basest of men*, at the end of the verse, may refer to Nebuchadnezzar, either in his truly abject state of cruelty and pride, or in his state of humiliation; when he who bringeth low the proud, exalted him again, after he had humbled him to the dung-hill.

Ver. 19. Then Daniel—was astonished for one hour] Stood in silent astonishment for nearly an hour. This, doubtless, arose from his consideration of the extraordinary and af-

the heaven, and the light thereof to all the earth;

21 Whose leaves *were* fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it *was* meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation:

22 It *is* thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth.

23 And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and *let* his portion *be* with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him;

24 This *is* the interpretation, O king, and this *is* the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king:

25 That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

26 And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule.

27 Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.

28 ¶ All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar.

29 At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon.

30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house

selecting circumstances of the dream, as appears from the latter part of the verse.

Ver. 25. They shall drive thee from men] In the Chaldee and Hebrew the plural active *they shall do*, signifies no more than *thus it shall be*, be the cause what it will: so that the meaning is, that Nebuchadnezzar should be punished with madness, which should so deprave his imagination while he yet retained his memory, and perhaps his reason in some intervals, as that he should fancy himself to be a beast, and live as such, till his heart, that is, his apprehension, appetite, or likings, should be changed from man to beast. All this time the stump, which was to be a tree again, is fenced or guarded; no successor was to attempt his life, or step into his throne; which he was to reassume when his reason returned, and his heart was humbled before God. This sort of madness might be the *lycanthropy*, mentioned by naturalists and medical writers, which makes men go, or imagine they go, out of their houses like *wolves*, and bite and wound whatever comes in their way. See Chandler's Vindication of the Defence, p. 25. and the first note on the last verse of this chapter.

Ver. 25. As oxen] Bochart describes the buffalo or wild ox as a fullen, malevolent, spiteful animal, attacking the unwary traveller with great fierceness. Though these fierce animals are for the most part found in Africa, yet Pliny observes, p. 142. that wild oxen were to be met with in ancient Scythia, and therefore probably on the Armenian mountains, not far from Babylonia. Mr. Bruce observes, that in Abyssinia the buffalo is the most ferocious animal in that part of the country where he resides; and yet that in Egypt it is the only one kept for giving milk; and that

they are governed by children of ten years old without any apprehension of danger, though apparently of the same species with the Ethiopian. Vol. v. p. 82. And Thevenot gives us a curious account of an use which was made of them on the Tigris, which he observed in his voyage from Mosul to Bagdad. I saw, says he, an experiment of the dexterity the people of the country have to cross the water without a bridge. I perceived forty or fifty she-buffles driven by a naked boy, who came to sell their milk; these buffles took the water, and swam in a square body; the little boy stood upright upon the last, and stepping from one to another drove them on with a stick, and that with as much force and assurance as if he had been on dry land; sometimes sitting down upon them.

Ver. 29. At the end of twelve months] God deferred the execution of his threats against this impious prince; he gave him a whole year to repent and return to him; but, seeing that he persevered in his crimes, the measure of his iniquities being full, he put his menaces in execution. See Calmet.

He walked in the palace] As he was walking upon the palace. It is well known, that the roofs of the buildings in the East were flat or plain, over which the inhabitants used to walk for pleasure. "The palace of Koscam, (says Mr. Bruce, vol. iv. p. 271.) consists of a square tower of three stories, with a flat parapet roof or terrace, and battlements about it." But "the palace of Gondar and all its contiguous buildings are surrounded by a substantial stone wall thirty feet high, with battlements upon the outer wall, and a parapet roof between the outer and inner, by which you can go along the whole and look
" into

of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?

31 While the word *was* in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, *saying*, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee.

32 And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling *shall be* with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

33 The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' *feathers*, and his nails like birds' *claws*.

34 And at the end of the days, I Nebu-

chadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation:

35 And all the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

36 At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me.

37 Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol

“into the street: the four sides of this wall are above an English mile and half in length.” Vol. iii. p. 380. In a situation like one of these was Nebuchadnezzar placed in the passage before us, in order to take a more full view of his city, and to enjoy the fresh air, according to Sir John Chardin, that is, to gratify his ease and pride; when he pronounced the following extravagant soliloquy.

Ver. 30. Is not this great Babylon that I have built] The circuit of this city is said to have been 360 stadia at least, or more than 45 miles, and Pliny extends it to 60 miles. Herodotus describes it as a square, each side of which was 120 stadia, or 480 in circumference: the height of its walls was 50 cubits according to the lowest reckoning, and the breadth of them such that six chariots abreast, according to Diodorus, might drive along them. It was beautifully situated on the Euphrates; so that a branch of that river ran through the midst of it, over which was a bridge of a furlong in length, with a magnificent palace at each end. That it is agreeable to Scripture language and the manner of the Hebrews to style that person the builder of a city, who restores it after a state of neglect to its pristine beauty, and improves and adorns it, may be learnt from 2 Chron. xi. 6. and from 2 Kings, xiv. 22. where cities are said to be built by the kings that repaired, or enlarged and fortified them, although they had been constructed long before. Bochart thinks that Babylon was as much indebted to Nebuchadnezzar as Rome was to Augustus Cæsar, who used to boast, as Suetonius relates in his life, that he received the city of brick, and left it of marble. Whatever we read of the original construction of Babylon by Nimrod or Belus, or of its enlargement by Semiramis, yet it was either of little account, or certainly not as one of the wonders of the world, till the walls with their hundred gates, the temple of Belus, the monarch's

most magnificent palace, the hanging gardens, and other grand works and improvements, were added by the king who is here said to have built it. See Joseph. Ant. from Berosus, lib. x. cap. 11. Some of these great works are said to have been finished by Nitocris, who probably completed the plan which Nebuchadnezzar had begun. Nineveh had been the capital of the Assyrian empire, and was for a long time the most considerable city: according to Diodorus, lib. ii. its circuit was reckoned near sixty English miles, or, as the prophet Jonah describes it, of three days' journey, allowing twenty miles to a day. It is reported by some to have been much larger than Babylon, and to have had the preference given to it in several respects. Nor was it till after the destruction of this city that Babylon came into great repute. Now this happened in the time of Nabopollassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, who lived at Babylon, but was not peaceably established in the empire, nor was the seat of empire completely fixed herein, till the reign of his son. Herodotus relates, that the wealth and resources of the Babylonian state were so great, that it was equal to one-third part of all Asia; and that beside the tribute, if the other supplies for the great king were divided into twelve parts, according to the twelve months of the year, Babylon would supply four, and all Asia the other eight. See lib. i. p. 77. Ed. Gron.

Ver. 34. And at the end of the days, &c.] “God regarded me with the eyes of his mercy: my mind was restored: I humbled myself before the Lord; I acknowledged the greatness of his power, and the justice of his wrath: I applied to him, and obtained pity.” It should appear from what Nebuchadnezzar says, that his conversion was real; and we may consider him as a convert to the Jewish religion.

Ver. 36. Brightness] Grandeur.

Ver.

and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

Ver. 37. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise, &c.] The reader, desirous of entering more fully into the circumstances of Nebuchadnezzar's extraordinary madness, will find ample satisfaction in Calmet's remarks on the metamorphosis of that monarch. We shall conclude with the following observations of the learned Dr. Mead upon the subject: "All the circumstances of Nebuchadnezzar's case agree so well with an hypochondriacal madness, that to me it appears evident that Nebuchadnezzar was seized with this distemper, and under its influence ran wild into the fields; and that, fancying himself transformed into an ox, he fed on grass, in the manner of cattle. For every sort of madness is the disease of a disturbed imagination; which this unhappy man laboured under full seven years. And through neglect of taking proper care of himself, his hair and nails grew to an excessive length; whereby the latter growing thicker and crooked, resembled the claws of birds. Now the ancients called persons affected with this species of madness, *λυκανθρωποι*, or *κυνανθρωποι*, because they went abroad in the night, imitating *wolves* or *dogs*; particularly intent upon opening the sepulchres of the dead; and had their legs much ulcerated, either by frequent falls, or the bite of dogs: in like manner as the daughters of Proetus, related to have been mad, who, as Virgil says, *Ecl. vi. 48*,

— *Implerunt falsis mugitibus agros.*

"With mimic howlings fill'd the fields."

"For, as Servius observes, their minds were possessed with such a species of madness, that, fancying themselves cows, they ran into the fields, bellowed often, and dreaded the plough. But these according to Ovid, *Metam. xv. 325*. the physician Melampus

— *Per carmen et herbas*

Eripuit Furiis.

"Snatch't from the Furies by his charms and herbs."

"Nor was this disorder unknown to the moderns; for Schenckius records a remarkable instance of it in a husbandman of Padua, who, imagining that he was a wolf, attacked, and even killed several people in the fields; and when at length he was taken, he persevered in declaring himself a real wolf, and that the only difference consisted in the inversion of his skin and hair. But it may be objected to our opinion, that this misfortune was foretold to the king, so that he might have prevented it by correcting his morals; and therefore it is not probable that it befel him in the course of nature. But we know, that those things which God executes, either through clemency or vengeance, are frequently performed by the assistance of natural causes. Thus, having threatened Hezekiah with death, and being afterwards moved by his prayers, he restored him to life, and made use of figs laid on the tumour, as a medicine for his disease. He ordered king Herod, upon account of his pride, to be devoured by worms: and nobody doubts but that the plague which is generally [and justly] attributed to divine wrath, most

"commonly owes its origin to corrupted air." See Dr. Mead's Works, *Medica Sacra*, chap. vii. p. 182.

Praise and extol, &c.] This great king probably lived only one year after his recovery, and it might be hoped that during that term he continued in the faith and worship of the true God. But, however that was, his death happened about the thirty-seventh year of Jehoiachin's captivity, after he had reigned as sole monarch forty-three years. He is said to have been one of the greatest princes that had reigned in the East for many ages, and Josephus *Ant. lib. x.* quotes Berofus and Megasthenes as both bearing testimony either to his valour, his wealth, or his magnificence. He was doubtless made use of as an instrument of providence to inflict the divine vengeance on several nations, and many of the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel were fulfilled by him. It had been foretold, especially by the prophet Ezekiel in the 26th and following chapters, that he should reduce Tyre, and subdue Egypt: the former of which he besieged for thirteen years, and at length took it, after it was nearly depopulated, and the effects of the inhabitants transported to new Tyre, an island not far from the old city, which was afterwards reduced by Alexander. While he was employed in this siege, he executed the wrath of the Almighty on some of the nations in the neighbourhood, as on the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Edomites, and the Philistines: but in a particular manner the Jewish nation often felt the power of his arm under several of their kings: their city Jerusalem was besieged not only in the reign of Jehoiakim, but again under his son Jehoiakin, and multitudes of persons were sent into captivity to Babylon; so numerous indeed, that scarce enough were left for necessary uses; 2 Kings, xxiv. He came afterwards with all his army and pitched against it, and built forts against it, under the reign of Zedekiah, when the siege continued from the tenth month of the ninth year of that king until his eleventh year (see 2 Kings, xxv. and Jer. lii.) at which time there was a dreadful famine in the city; and the men of war thereof escaping in the night, the army of the Chaldees pursued them, took the king and put out his eyes at Riblah, and carried him to Babylon, where he was kept in prison till his death. Soon after this, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, about two years before the siege of Tyre, he sent his general Nebuzar-adan against Jerusalem, who burnt the temple and palace, and almost the whole of the city; and at length carried off the small remains of the people into captivity, leaving only a few poor stragglers to till the ground. "Thus Judah was carried away captive out of his own land," Jer. lii. 27. After Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed Jerusalem, and reduced Tyre, he marched into Egypt, and, taking advantage of some civil dissensions in that kingdom, he slew many of the inhabitants, carried away others as captives, enriched himself and his army with a large share of plunder, and made himself master of the country, so that he had now subdued the whole territory from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates. To which may be added, that he had taken the province of Elam from

C H A P. V.

Belshazzar's impious feast. A hand-writing, unknown to the magicians, troubleth the king. At the recommendation of the queen, Daniel is brought: he reproveth the king of pride and idolatry, readeth and interpreteth the writing. The monarchy is translated to the Medes.

[Before Christ 539.]

BELSHAZZAR the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand.

from Astyages, agreeably to the prediction of Jeremiah, chap. xlix. 34. and had placed his throne therein, or fixed his royal pavilion in it, as a token of supreme and sovereign authority. How he employed himself afterwards, in the peaceable part of his reign, in improving and adorning his great city has already been intimated. Most of the events both of war and peace contributed to gratify his lust and to swell his pride; till at length, his madness having reached its utmost pitch, he was at once reduced to a level with the beasts of the earth, and thereby made to exhibit an useful example to future generations, of the malignant force of inveterate habits, of the dangerous effects of licentious tyranny, of the weakness of human nature, attended with all the greatest advantages of wealth and power, to govern and conduct itself properly, and of the sovereign controlling power of Providence in the highest and most important affairs of life. From the time of his transformation to his death we know but little of his history. Whatever was the fate of this great king, it will be more to our present purpose to observe, that he was succeeded by his son Hoarudam, according to Ptolemy, who is the Evil-merodach of Jeremiah, who married a discreet and prudent woman called Nitocris, from whom was born a son, whose history is the subject of the next chapter. After the death of Evil-merodach, who reigned two years, Niricassolassar or Neriglissar, who seems to have been the chief of the conspirators against the last king, succeeded him: he had married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, and in the course of his reign made a great stand against the growing power of the Medes and Persians; but at length, after a reign of four years, was killed in a battle with them under the command of Cyrus. His son Laborosarchod succeeded him, and having reigned only nine months, and not reaching a Thoth or beginning of an Egyptian year, he is not mentioned by Ptolemy: however, he is said to have been quite the reverse to his father, and after he had exercised many acts of wanton cruelty (see Xen. Cyrop. lib. iii. iv.) he was murdered by his own subjects, and succeeded by Nabonadius or Belshazzar.

Several uses might be made of these historical sketches in explaining various parts of this book: but I shall only remind the reader, that as the captivity began in the year 605 before Christ, or one year before Nebuchadnezzar began his reign, so we shall be now advanced as far as the fifty-first year thereof, at the entrance upon the reign of Nabonadius.

2 Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein.

3 Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The introduction to this edict begins not with pompous titles, as was the usual style of eastern monarchs, but with that simplicity and humility which afflictions had taught the royal penman, *Nebuchadnezzar the king.*

It is directed to *all people, &c. that dwell in all the earth;* who, while he published his own shame, might admire and adore the greatness and the grace of God herein displayed. And he adds his cordial salutation, *Peace be multiplied unto you.*

The design of the writing is, to acquaint them with the signs and wonders that God had wrought towards him. The world in general had heard, no doubt, of the strange events which had befallen him; his dream, his madness, and recovery: here he gives an account of it from his own pen; content to bear his reproach, if God may be glorified thereby. *Note;* What God has in general done *against* us as the effect of our sins, as well as what he hath done *for* us in mercy, should be mentioned to his glory, and for our own humiliation.

In the contemplation of what had passed, he breaks forth into admiration of God's wondrous works; *How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders!* the more he reviewed the scene, the more he was lost in amazement: convinced by fullest experience, his pride is mortified; he feels himself a worm, the creature of a day; he foresees his own monarchy hastening to ruin; but he beholds a kingdom about to be erected, which should be eternal, and humbly acknowledges God's incontestable right to the universal sovereignty and everlasting dominion.

2dly, Returned victorious from his wars, a conquered world at his feet, the mighty Nebuchadnezzar after all his toils sets himself down to rest in his palace; *flourishing* in health of body and vigour of mind, crowned with glory and affluence, and no enemy able to trouble his repose. Then, when most he seemed secure, God's secret hand dashed all his joys, and one dream filled him with terror and dismay: so easily can God disturb the joyous sinner, and in a moment, even in the midst of his worldly comforts, make him feel the beginning of sorrows.

1. He summoned his magicians and astrologers to attend; repeated his dream, and demanded the interpretation. But though they had boasted, that they wanted nothing more than to hear it, in order to explain it, now their rules of art or magic failed them, and they are obliged to confess their ignorance.

2. When

the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them.

4 They drank wine, and praised the gods

of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.

5 ¶ In the same hour came forth fingers

2. When none besides could give the king any satisfaction, at last Daniel appears; whether sent for expressly, or of his own accord coming in at this juncture, is not said. He is called Belteshazzar, from Bel, the god of the Chaldeans; and the king, who had before experienced his superior wisdom, addresses him with high respect, as the *master of the magicians*; not as being of their number, but as excelling them in knowledge, or as appointed their president; but that for which he most admired him was, that the *spirit of the holy gods* was in him: either he speaks as a heathen, who believed in a multitude of gods; or perhaps he might have learned from the Jews the knowledge of the Elohim, the three Persons in one Godhead, and concluded from what he had experienced before, that under the teaching of God's Spirit, every secret could by him be easily interpreted.

3. He declares to him the dream which troubled him. He beheld a lofty and spreading tree which reached to the heavens, and was visible to the ends of the earth; the *leaves* or *branches* beautiful, and laden with fruit, affording shelter and food to all the beasts of the earth, and the fowls of heaven. When, lo! a *watcher* and an *holy one* came down from heaven, and published aloud the decree of the most High, that the tree must be cut down, its branches broken, its fruit destroyed; and all the beasts and fowls are bid to depart from under it. Yet is it not to be rooted up, but the stump must be left encircled with a band of iron; and this the holy messenger explains of a man, who should be degraded into a brute, exposed to the dew of heaven, and dwell among the beasts during seven years; and this is by the *immutable decree of the watchers, and the demand of the holy ones*; and the end purposed in this whole transaction is, to magnify the most High, to make his universal power and sovereignty known; who at his pleasure can humble the greatest, and exalt the meanest of the sons of men. Such was the dream, which since the magicians cannot interpret, he looks to Daniel to explain, confident that he is able to unfold the secret.

4. Daniel, at his command, addresses himself to the task assigned him.

[1.] He appeared at first exceedingly affected with what he heard, *astonished for one hour*, at the heavy judgment contained in the vision. *Note*; The ministers of God behold, with deepest concern, the miseries impending over the heads of the wicked, who seem unconcerned and unaffected with any sense of their own danger.

[2.] He introduces with a most respectful compliment the unpleasing interpretation. The king had observed his amazement, and bid him not fear to disclose the secret, desiring, however terrible, to know the truth: and Daniel, not as a courtier who meant to flatter, but as one who really wished the prosperity of his prince, intimates how desirous he was, if God so pleased, that the dire contents of this vision had rather respected the king's enemies than himself. *Note*; When we are constrained to be the mes-

sengers of evil to sinners, we must do it in such a way as to evince that we have not desired the woeful day, but wish the evil averted.

[3.] He declares plainly the purport of the dream, (1.) The tree represents this mighty monarch, *It is thou, O king*; whose conquests had spread on every side; whose growing greatness all admired; under whose government the nations enjoyed protection, and by him were rendered rich and flourishing. Thus should the kings of the earth be the fathers of their people, protecting them from oppression, and seeking to promote their wealth and prosperity: and they are great indeed who thus improve their delegated power. (2.) His doom is read, which his pride had provoked. The watcher and the holy one coming down from heaven, is usually interpreted of holy angels, whose ministry God employs in executing the decrees of his providence, and who approve and applaud them as altogether righteous; or possibly it may signify that *watcher* over his Israel, that *Holy One*, the uncreated Angel of the covenant, to whom all judgment is committed, and who in the government of the world fulfils the counsels of the *Holy Ones*, the persons of the undivided Godhead, the *watchers* over their believing people.

To vast prosperity was Nebuchadnezzar advanced; but the command is, *Hew the tree down*, and then his greatness and glory would all be laid in the dust; so vain and transitory is all human grandeur, which one blast of the breath of God's displeasure destroys in a moment. Fallen from his high estate, and struck with madness, he shall be driven from the abode of men, and make his dwelling seven years with the beasts, himself a brute in human shape, and eating grass like the ox. *Note*; Among the most deplorable of all judgments is madness; may we never by our pride, and the abuse of our intellectual powers, provoke God to deprive us of our reason!

The judgment is heavy; yet doth God in the midst of wrath remember mercy. Though cut down, he is not utterly destroyed; though bound as a madman with a band of iron, the root remains, and recovery is not impossible. God's design in the visitation, however severe, is gracious; even to humble his pride, and make him and all men know God's power, and own his sovereignty who rules over all, and doth according to the counsels of his own will. And when it shall be thus made manifest that *the heavens do rule*, even the God whose throne is there, then shall his senses return, he shall again resume the reins of empire, and give to the most High the glory due unto his name.

5. The prophet finishes his discourse with a word of faithful and seasonable advice. He introduces it with great submission, and begs a kind reception from the king of what was meant purely for his good. *Note*; We must court sinners to secure their own mercies. His sins were the cause of the threatened judgments; these, therefore, he exhorts him without delay to forsake. As his despotic power had probably been in many instances abused to the purposes

of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.

purposes of injustice and oppression, he urges him to the practice of righteousness, and shewing mercy to the poor; many of whom groaned probably under captive bands, and cried for deliverance. And this he presses as a means, at least, of lengthening his tranquillity, though it might not be able to avert the threatened judgment. *Note;* Without repentance and amendment, there can be no hope of pardon and salvation.

3dly, We find it was not long ere the divine decree took place; and behold here its exact accomplishment.

1. One year God's patience waited; for he is long-suffering, even toward the most obstinate offenders; but still this monarch's heart remained unchanged. Walking on the roof of his palace, or on the terrace of those amazing hanging gardens which overlooked the city, his eyes beheld with conscious pride the glorious prospect full in his view; and while his bosom glowed with self-importance, his tongue betrayed the language of his heart. The king spake and said, either to his nobles around him, or some foreigners whom he took with him to survey the vast metropolis, or in a secret whisper of self-applause, *Is not this great Babylon that I have built?* &c. He ascribes the whole to his own power and might, and forgets the God who had given him the ability. No wonder, therefore, that the end he proposed was neither God's glory, nor his people's good, but *the honour of his own majesty*. Such self-lovers are all proud men: let us beware of contemplating with self-complacency any thing that we have done, lest God behold the robbery of his glory, and smite us for our pride, as he did Nebuchadnezzar.

2. Instantly as the words dropped from his lips, a voice from heaven pronounced his doom; that he is deposed from his dignity, and the prophecy before delivered is immediately to take place; and this is no sooner spoken than executed. On a sudden his reason is lost; degenerated into a brute in human shape, he is driven from his palace, and herds with the beasts of the forest, feeding with them upon grass as the ox; his body exposed to all the inclemencies of the sky, his hair grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. *Note;* God can soon humble the proudest, and make those who were the envy and admiration of mankind despicable as the worm that crawls.

4thly, The prophecy of his humiliation we have seen fulfilled, and may expect in its season to hear of his restoration.

1. At the end of seven years he *lifted up his eyes to heaven*, not merely as a man rescued from the herd of brutes, but as an humbled sinner looking to a pardoning God. The return of reason itself had not been a blessing, if grace had not opened the eyes of his mind to a discovery of his provocations, of the justice of his sufferings, and the glory of the divine Majesty. To bring him to this, was the purpose of God's heavy hand upon him, and then even his madness was his mercy: he had never truly *come to himself* if he had not been thus *beside himself*. Thus God sometimes seems to work by contraries; and when,

like the patriarch, we may think all *these things are against us*, they are then working together for our good.

2. The first exercise of his enlightened mind is adoration. *I blessed the most High, &c.* *Note;* They who live in the habitual neglect of prayer and praise, however wise they may be reputed among men, act more madly than he that eateth straw like the ox. He acknowledges now the eternal dominion and sovereignty of God, who for ever lives, for ever reigns; for his kingdom is from everlasting to everlasting. Before him all nations are as nothing, and the greatest of men, in comparison with him, insignificant as the drop of the bucket, or the dust of the balance. His kingdom is universal; angels as well as men acknowledge him their Lord, the creatures of his pleasure, and wholly subject to his controul. His power is irresistible, his arm omnipotent; whatever he wills is done, nor dare any arraign his proceedings, or challenge an account of any of his matters. Not that he ever doth, or can do wrong; *his ways are judgment*, perfectly righteous and wise, and *his works truth*, fulfilling with nicest exactness whatever he hath spoken in his word; and *those that walk in pride he is able to abase*, an eminent instance of which Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged himself to be, and wishes other proud men to be warned by his example; *whilst he extols and praises the King of heaven*, who in wrath had still remembered mercy.

3. With his returning reason his majestic countenance returned. He appeared in his former brightness and glory; his lords received him again as their sovereign, probably acquainted by Daniel with the dream, and the expected recovery of their king. Once more he resumed the reins of government, and under the divine benediction *excellent majesty was added* unto him; he grew more respected than ever, and his latter end was greater than his beginning. He did not, however, long survive this wondrous change; but, I would hope, continued in the same blessed sentiments, and died a monument of rich and unmerited grace.

CHAP. V.

THIS chapter contains the history of Belshazzar's polluting the sacred vessels taken from the temple of God, of the hand-writing against the wall denouncing his consequent punishment, of the interpretation of that hand-writing by Daniel, of the death of the king, and the kingdom's being transferred to another people.

Ver. 1. Belshazzar the king] The grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, the Labynetus of Herodotus, and the last monarch of the Babylonian kingdom. This last king is said by Ptolemy to have reigned 17 years, and we read of the *third year of Belshazzar*, Dan. viii. 1. but Laborosoarchod reigned only nine months. Certain it is from Jer. xxvii. 6, 7. that the kingdom would be continued to the son's son of Nebuchadnezzar, and from 2 Chron. xxxvi. 20. that to him and his sons the sovereignty would be continued until the kingdom of Persia; and therefore one at least of his grandsons must have reigned in Babylon after Evil-merodach, who could not be the last king, or Belshazzar.

6 Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.

7 The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spake, and said to the wife men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.

8 Then came in all the king's wife men; but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof.

9 Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished.

10 ¶ Now the queen, by reason of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banquet-house: and the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed:

11 There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods: and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers:

12 Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belshazzar:

shazzar. And there is very little reason to doubt, from a review of the circumstances recorded in Scripture and by the profane historians, that the Belshazzar here meant was not the short-lived tyrant above mentioned, whose cruelties are recounted by Xenophon, and who was the daughter's son; but rather the son's son of Nebuchadnezzar, or Nabonadius the son of Evil-merodach. And this is the opinion of Jerom from Berofus in Josephus, cont. Ap. i. 20. The arguments usually adduced to settle this difficulty may be seen at large in the Univ. Hist. vol. iv. Note. p. 422, &c. as also in Dr. Prideaux, Conn. p. i. b. 2.

Made a great feast] For the principal officers of his court. This feast was made at a time of public rejoicing; being an annual festivity, when the whole night was spent in revelling. Cyrus took this advantage to make himself master of the city, as Herodotus and Xenophon relate, and Jeremiah foretold. See Jer. l. 24. li. 29, &c. This chapter, according to the order of time, might be placed after the 7th and 8th. In the style of the Hebrews, the grandfather is frequently called father. See ver. 2. 11. 13.

Ver. 2. Whiles he tasted the wine] When he grew warm with wine. Houbigant. The golden and silver vessels here spoken of, were those carried by Nebuchadnezzar from the temple of Jerusalem to the treasure-house of his god, (see chap. i. 2.) and which were there set apart for religious uses. So that this farther profanation of them, as Dr. Prideaux observes, was contrary to the rules of their own religion, and may be supposed to have been committed by Belshazzar in an excessive riot of drinking, as the text, according to Houbigant's translation, implies.

Ver. 4. And praised the gods of gold] Here is a kind of competition, or the appearance of a triumph of the false gods over the true one, whom still Nebuchadnezzar had

honoured and acknowledged, and prohibited by a solemn decree that any one should speak lightly of him. The competition appears much stronger in the Alexandrine and Coptic versions, which add, "But the everlasting God they praised not." Such a wanton and sacrilegious insult deserved and called for exemplary punishment.

Ver. 6. Then the king's countenance, &c.] The expressions in this verse, in a collected view, contain such a description of terror as is rarely to be met with, the dead change of the countenance, the perturbation of the thoughts, the joints of the loins become relaxed, and the knees smiting hither and thither or against each other, are very strong indications of horror.

Ver. 8. But they could not read the writing] Because, says Houbigant, it was written in the ancient Samaritan characters, and such as were used upon their coins; which were very unlike the Chaldean letters: for these three compendiums of three sentences, *Mene, Tekel, Peres*, were such as were commonly found on their coins.

Ver. 10. Now the queen, &c.] Now the queen, on account of the affair which had happened to the king and his lords, came, &c. The word for countenance at the end of the verse signifies splendour, or the serenity of the face. The king's wives and concubines sat with him at the feast, ver. 2, 3. so that the person here mentioned must have been the queen-mother, whom Herodotus calls *Nitocris*; a lady of eminent wisdom, who had the chief direction of public affairs. See Prideaux, and Herod. lib. i. and cap. 185.

Ver. 11. There is a man in thy kingdom, &c.] Belshazzar certainly could not have been well acquainted with Daniel, though Nebuchadnezzar had promoted him so considerably. This argues him to have been a weak and wicked prince, according to the character which the historians gave of him; leaving the care of public business to his mother.

Ver.

now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation.

13 Then was Daniel brought in before the king. *And* the king spake and said, unto Daniel, *Art* thou that Daniel, which *art* of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry?

14 I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods *is* in thee, and *that* light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee.

15 And now the wise *men*, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not shew the interpretation of the thing:

16 And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and *have* a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom.

17 ¶ Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation.

18 O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour:

19 And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled

and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down.

20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him:

21 And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling *was* with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and *that* he appointeth over it whomsoever he will.

22 And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this;

23 But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath *is*, and whose *are* all thy ways, hast thou not glorified.

24 Then was the part of the hand sent from him, and this writing was written.

25 ¶ And this *is* the writing that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

Ver. 13. Which art? Who is.

Ver. 16. That thou canst make interpretations? That thou canst explain what is to be explained, or what stands in need of explanation. And dissolve doubts is literally to untie knots; a manner of speaking used to this day in the letters of the kings of Persia, to denote an expert judge, or an intelligent governor. See Chardin's Voyage to Persia, p. 228. and the note on ver. 29.

Ver. 17. Let thy gifts be to thyself? This is a compliment. He afterwards accepts what he here declines through civility. He means to say, that he was ready to do whatever the king commanded, without any respect to a recompense. See Calmet.

Ver. 19. Whom he would he slew? We have here a strong picture of the absolute and independent power of these princes: they regarded their subjects only as their slaves.

Xerxes, having assembled the great men of his kingdom, when he had determined to undertake the war against Greece, said to them, "I have assembled you, that I might not seem to act solely by my own counsel; but remember, that I expect obedience, not advice from you." See Calmet.

Ver. 21. The wild asses? See the beautiful description of the wild ass, in Job, chap. xxxix. 5, &c. Instead of ruled, in the latter part of this verse, we may read ruled.

Ver. 24. Then was the part of the hand sent? Therefore is the hand sent from him, the fingers whereof have formed this writing. Houbigant.

Ver. 25. MENE, &c.? These words are fully explained by Daniel in the following verses. The word Mene is doubled, to shew that the thing is certain and established by God; as Joseph told Pharaoh in a similar case.

26 This is the interpretation of the thing : MENE ; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.

27 TEKEL ; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

28 PERES ; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

29 Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and *put* a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

30 ¶ In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.

Ver. 28. The Medes and Persians] The kingdom of the Medes seems to have been but of short duration : it probably had its name of Media from מדי *Medi*, the third son of Japhet ; but its first establishment into a kingdom is dated about 150 years before the reign of Cyrus. Sir Isaac Newton reckons up only five kings. Herodotus (lib. i.) tells us, the first was Deioces, a man of great prudence, and who reigned a long time. Phraortes his son succeeded him, whom Calmet judges to have been the Arphaxad of the book of Judith, but Prideaux is of a different opinion : see Conn. p. i. b. 1. This monarch was followed by Cyaxares, a prince who widely extended the empire over Asia, and left it to his son Astyages, the father, according to Xenophon, of Cyaxares the second, or Darius Medus. Pliny, in his Nat. Hist. p. 100., settles the geography of Media in this manner : it had the Caspians and the Parthians on the east, the Lower Assyria, called Sitacene, Susiana, and Persis, on the south ; on the west Adiabene or the middle parts of Assyria, that is to say, Diarbek ; and Armenia on the north. Virgil, in his 2d Georg. calls it “ ditissima terra,” a most fertile country, and celebrates it for the production of the Malum Medicum or the Citron. Polybius also, lib. v., takes notice of its great abundance in corn and cattle, and of a multitude of cities and towns in the plains amid the mountains which divide it from east to west. Its capital Ecbatane was a very spacious and opulent city, which the Persian kings used for a summer-residence ; and is said to have been fifteen miles in circumference, to have had walls seventy cubits high, and fifty broad. Judith, chap. i. 2. This place is also much noticed in the book of Tobit, as where his son Tobias was married, to which he retired from Nineveh, and ended his days in it.

Persia, whose capital is Persepolis, situated on the south of Media, gives name to the gulph below, which receives the rivers Euphrates and Tigris. It consisted of three parts, Persis, Elymais, from whence the Elamites of Scripture, and Susiana, unless the latter should be considered as a distinct region, having had Susa for its capital. But Susiana was added to Persia by Cyaxares the first. This whole tract, together with Media and Assyria or Babylon, as also Lydia and other countries, were all united under Cyrus, who was the first monarch of this Persian empire, as Darius Codomannus was the fourteenth and last.

Ver. 29. They clothed Daniel] The clothing of Daniel with scarlet was an honour of a different kind from that mentioned, chap. ii. 46. We have no custom of this kind. Persons receive favours of various sorts from princes ; but the coming out from their presence in a different dress, is not an honour in use among us, though

it is still practised in the East. Some doubt, however, may be made concerning the precise intention of thus clothing him ; whether it was the investing him with the dignity of the third ruler of the kingdom, by putting on him the dress belonging to that office ; or whether it was a distinct honour ; the modern customs of the East not determining this point, because *caffetans*, or *robes*, are at this day put on people with both views. Thus Norden, speaking of one of the Arab princes of Upper Egypt, says, that he had received at Girge the *caffetan* of the bey, which was the only mark of respect they paid there at that time to the Turkish government, force deciding between the competitors who should have the dignity, and he that was sent to Girge being absolutely to be vested with the *caffetan* by the bey. But then we find too, that these *caffetans* are given merely as an honour, and not as an ensign of office. La Roque tells us, that he himself received it at Sidon, and three other attendants on the French consul, along with the consul himself, who, upon a particular occasion, waited on Ishmael the basha of that place. Agreeable to which, Thevenot tells us, that he saw an ambassador from the Great Mogul come out from an audience that he had of the Grand Signior with a vest of cloth of gold upon his back, a *caffetan* of which sort of stuff thirty of his retinue also had : and elsewhere he observes, that he saw one hundred and eight of the retinue of an Egyptian bey thus honoured along with their master, by a bashaw of that country. But if it should be indeterminate whether this scarlet vestment was merely *the dress* belonging to the office with which Daniel was dignified, or a distinct honour, it is by no means uncertain whether it was put upon him or not, since these *caffetans* are always in readiness in the East, and are wont immediately to be put on : contrary to the sentiments of Lowth, who supposes in his commentary on the place, that though the king thought himself bound to perform the promise of the 16th verse, yet that it was *likely it could not take effect* at that unseasonable time of the night, and therefore that the words might have been better translated, “ *Then commanded Belshazzar, that they should clothe Daniel with scarlet.*” This is certainly an unnecessary refinement. See *Observations*, p. 278.

Ver. 30. In that night was Belshazzar—slain] He and all his nobles were slain together, in the midst of their feasting and revels. Xenophon relates the history thus : Two deserters, *Gadatas* and *Gobrias*, having assisted some of the Persian army to kill the guards and seize upon the palace, entered the room where the king was, whom they found in a posture of defence ; but they soon dispatched him and his attendants. See Xenoph. *Cyropæd.* lib. vii. and Bishop Chandler’s *Vindication*, p. 17, 18. where the Bishop observes,

31 And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.

CHAP. VI.

Daniel is made chief of the presidents: they, conspiring against him, obtain an idolatrous decree. Daniel, accused of the breach thereof, is cast into the lions' den. He is saved, his adversaries devoured, and God magnified by a decree.

[Before Christ 538.]

IT pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom ;

2 And over these three presidents ; of whom Daniel was first : that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage.

3 Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him : and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.

4 ¶ Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom ; but they could find none occasion nor fault ; forasmuch as he was faithful,

observes, that the ancient historians agree with Daniel as to the main of his history, and one or other of them confirm every part of it.

The punishment of Nebuchadnezzar, the death of Belshazzar, and the expiration of the kingdom, may serve to remind us of that fine passage of the wise son of Sirach, which I shall transcribe from the tenth chapter of the book of Ecclesiasticus. " The beginning of pride is, when one departeth from God, and his heart is turned away from his Maker. For pride is the beginning of sin, and he that hath it shall pour out abomination. The Lord hath cast down the thrones of proud princes, and set up the meek in their stead. The Lord hath plucked up the roots of the proud nations, and planted the lowly in their places. The Lord overthrew countries of the heathen, and hath made their memorial to cease from the earth. Pride was not made for men, nor furious anger for them that are born of a woman."

Ver. 31. *And Darius the Median took the kingdom*] And Darius the Mede accepted the kingdom ; so the Syriac and Arabic versions. This Darius, in the ninth chapter, is said to be of the seed of the Medes, and is supposed by the most judicious chronologers to have been the same with Cyaxares, the son of Astyages. Cyrus made him king of the Chaldeans, as being his uncle by the mother's side ; and left him the palace of the king of Babylon, to live there whenever he pleased.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Belshazzar, the subject of this chapter, was the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, Jer. xxvii. 7. whose monarchy, according to the term fixed in the prophetic word, was now hastening to ruin. We have here,

1. An account of his impiety and profaneness. Unaffected with the danger of his situation, though a victorious army was at the gates of Babylon ; on some returning solemnity in honour of his gods, or to celebrate his birth-day, he invites all the great men of his court, and chief officers of his army, to partake of a grand entertainment that he had provided, and makes one himself at the festal board, and drank wine before them. In the midst of mirth and jollity, the sacred vessels of the temple occurred to him ; and in a frolic, or to express his contempt of Israel's God, and to do honour to his own, he commands them to be brought, and all present drank out of them,

and praised their idol gods, who had given them these spoils of their enemies : probably the report of the deliverance of Israel from Babylon might now be propagated, the seventy years being just at an end ; some say that very night they expired ; and this might be done in defiance of Israel's God, and in ridicule of the prophetic word. Note ; (1.) Drunkenness is the door to every abomination. (2.) They are hastening apace to ruin, who can make a jest of things sacred. (3.) The joyous sinner in the midst of his carousals is a most pitiable object, dancing and singing on the brink of the gulph, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

2. A sudden event terribly interrupts their impious joys. In the midst of their carousals, a hand appears over against the candlestick, and writes upon the plaister of the wall. Struck with terror at the sight, Belshazzar's countenance changed ; his pallid cheeks, his quivering lips, his trembling knees, his tottering frame, bespoke the horrors of his soul ; and conscious guilt awakened dire forebodings of the dreadful doom hereby portended. In haste he calls aloud to bring the wisest of his Chaldean sages, and promises the highest rewards to the man who can read and interpret the writing, but in vain ; for though the words were Chaldee, the manner or form of writing was such as entirely baffled their skill ; or by a divine judgment, to make the skill of Daniel more illustrious, God confounded their understandings ; and this increased the more the anxiety of the monarch, and filled his lords with consternation and astonishment. Note ; (1.) God can reach the most daring sinners ; one touch of his hand, yea, their own thoughts let loose upon them, are enough to make them a terror to themselves. (2.) Shall an unknown writing thus trouble the conscience of Belshazzar, and shall not all the curses so plainly written in the book of God affect the careless and impenitent ?

2dly, In this state of dismay and confusion we have,

1. The advice of the queen ; who had not been present at the feast ; but, on hearing what had passed, had come to the banqueting house. She is supposed to be not the wife of Belshazzar, but of his father Evil-merodach, called by Herodotus Nitocris, and greatly famed for her prudence : though others think her to be Amytis, the grandmother of the king, and wife of Nebuchadnezzar. It appears that she was well acquainted with the transactions of former times, and knew the abilities of Daniel ;

neither was there any error or fault found in him.

5 Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we

and therefore is bold to say, though the wise men of Babylon were at a stand, that the king need not fear but an interpreter could be found. Probably Daniel's interest had long since declined at court: so likely often, in a new reign, are the best and most faithful of the ancient counsellors to be neglected. But the high character that the queen gives of this now forgotten sage could not but excite a desire to have him called. She speaks of him as something more than human, possessed of wisdom approaching omniscience, and penetration so deep, that no secrets or difficulties whatever puzzled him; and by experience the king Nebuchadnezzar had proved him to be possessed of a spirit far excelling all the magicians and astrologers of his kingdom. In consequence of which, he had advanced him to be master of all the sages, and named him Belshazzar, in honour of his god. The queen desires, therefore, that he may be sent for, and doubts not but he will give the king full satisfaction.

2. Daniel is instantly summoned, and appears before the king, unknown to him by person, as appears by Belshazzar's question, ver. 13. But having heard such high encomiums of his wisdom, he is desirous to try whether he can read and interpret the writing, of which the magicians confess their ignorance; and promises him the same rewards as he had offered to them, if he could clearly explain the matter: even that he should be arrayed in the richest robes of honour, and promoted to the third place for dignity in his kingdom.

3. Daniel undertakes to read and interpret the writing; but prefaces his discourse with some striking remarks and admonitions.

(1.) The proffered gifts he nobly disdains, as the reward of his interpretation; he neither wanted nor sought them. At his age, advancement would be but a burden; and when the whole government was so quickly to be overturned, such honours were not worth acceptance. Yet he will freely satisfy the king, if that can be called satisfaction, which, instead of relieving his fears, must increase his distress. *Note:* A sense of the near approaching end of all things should make us sit loose to the trifles of this changing and perishing world.

(2.) He recounts God's dispensations towards the king's father, or rather his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar; it being not unusual in scripture to term a more remote ancestor *father*. By the providence and gift of the most high God, from whom all good things come, and to whose blessing all our prosperity ought ever to be ascribed, Nebuchadnezzar had acquired such dominion, honour, and authority, as perhaps no prince before had ever attained to; so irresistible his power, that none dared to contend with him; and, trembling at his feet, all nations bowed before him. His government despotic, his authority absolute; the liberty and property, the life or death of all his subjects hung on his breath; his will was law, his orders obeyed without remonstrance or hesitation: a dangerous power to be vested in the bosom of a fallen creature, a curse upon the land where such arbitrary monarchs rule. Abusing his authority, Nebuchadnezzar had acted with

that tyranny and oppression which lawless power, directed by caprice, naturally produced; and, hardened in pride, he not only behaved unjustly to man, but insolently towards the most High, ascribing to his own prowess his successes, and affecting independence of every superior. For these things the God of heaven hurled him from his throne, and degraded him not merely to the lowest state of human meanness, but to a level with the brute creation, to be the companion of *wild asses*, justly depriving him of the reason that he had abused, and for his savageness and oppression sending him to dwell with the beasts that he chose to imitate; till, humbled in the dust, he was brought to acknowledge the government of the most High, and own himself the subject of his pleasure.

(3.) He arraigns Belshazzar for his crimes, aggravated by the neglect of all the warnings which God had given him in his father's case. He knew all that had passed, yet nevertheless,

[1.] He had not humbled his heart, but continued impenitent in the same pride and rebellion against God. *Note:* It is an aggravation of children's sins, if, instead of being admonished by their father's miseries, they persist to follow their destructive ways.

[2.] He had exceeded in impiety his ungodly fire. *Thou hast lifted up thyself against, or above the Lord of heaven,* with more daring blasphemy, defying his power and dishonouring his name, as if he was his superior; and shewing the contempt in which he held him, by his horrid profanation of the vessels of the temple, while he praised his idol gods, senseless as the vessels from which he poured out the libation to them.

[3.] *The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified;* a charge, before which who need not tremble! Our breath is from him; it is momentarily preserved by him, our ways under his controul, every event at his disposal. To glorify him is the great end of our being, our duty, and should be our delight; but we have failed and gone astray every one in his own way, casting off his government, and negligent of his glory. The Lord humble us for this, that we may not meet Belshazzar's doom.

4. Having thus proved his crimes, Daniel pronounces his doom, according to the tenor of the writing on the wall, the explication of which he had demanded. Then when his iniquity was at the height, at this impious feast, came this hand from God, and wrote these words—MENE MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. The words are Chaldee, and signify, *He hath numbered, he hath numbered, he hath weighed, and they divide;* the several particulars of which he explains:

MENE, *God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it;* the term of the monarchy is expiring, its ruin is near, and the word is repeated to shew its certainty.

TEKEL, *Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting;* God, who weighs in the balances of exact justice the actions and characters of men, pronounces him worthless and reprobate.

PERES, the singular of *Pharsin*, (*U* being the copulative,) *Thy*

find ~~it~~ against him concerning the law of his God.

6 Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever.

The kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians; such is the irreversible decree of the Almighty; and Belshazzar, convinced in his conscience that Daniel had spoken the truth, though so fearful the sentence, immediately confers on him the promised reward. Withering honours! the pageantry of an hour! and all this world's honours, viewed in their true light, are no better.

The sinner and the hypocrite's doom is like Belshazzar's. At death their days are numbered; in judgment they will be weighed in the balance of God's holy law, and found wanting; and then be given up to the devil and his angels, to be tormented to eternity.

3dly, The writing is scarcely sooner interpreted than verified. That very night the city was taken, and Belshazzar slain: taking advantage of this debauch of the king, as history informs us, Cyrus entered the city by the bed of the river, the waters of which he had cut off; and the guards being fast asleep, and overcome with wine, made no resistance; so that all the gates being opened, Gadatas and Gobryas, two great men, who, being ill used by Belshazzar, had revolted to Cyrus, went directly to the palace, and slew the king with all his attendants. Thus ended the Babylonish empire; and Darius the Mede, called also Cyaxares, the uncle of Cyrus, ascended the throne; the first king of the second monarchy. He was sixty-two years old, and consequently was born in the year that Jeconiah was carried captive: God so ordering, that at the very time his people were sent into Babylon, their deliverer should be provided. Cyrus reigned in conjunction with his uncle; though, being the younger, he is not mentioned; and after two years succeeded him in the sole government of the empire, concerning whom so many prophecies had gone before, all which, we find, he most exactly fulfilled. Thus, though God visit his people and the nations for their sins, there is still hope for returning penitents even in the darkest day of affliction.

CHAP. VI.

THIS chapter contains the history of Daniel's preference under Darius, of the envy which it excited in the principal officers of the state, and their conspiracy against him on that account. By their means he is cast into a den of lions, but miraculously preserved from injury; and the punishment is retorted upon his accusers, who are torn to pieces, and the king is brought to the acknowledgment and praise of the true God.

Ver. 1. It pleased Darius] That is, Cyaxares, whose father is called Assuerus, in the book of Tobit, chap. xiv. 15. as he is also by Daniel, chap. ix. 1. meaning in both places Astyages, or the king of Media, who concurred with the Assyrian monarch in the destruction of Nineveh. Herodotus and Xenophon make mention of an ancient gold coin called *Δαρικός* or Daric, as is presumed by many writers, from this king; from the first Darius,

2

7 All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a peti-

according to Suidas, or one prior to Hystaspes. This coin seems to have been called by the like name after the captivity in Ezra, ii. 69. and 1 Chron. xxix. 7. in the original. Sir Isaac Newton says he had seen one of them, and that it was stamped on one side with the effigies of an archer crowned with a spiked crown, with a bow in his left, and an arrow in his right hand, and clothed with a long robe, that it weighed two attic drams, and was of the value of the attic stater. Chron. of Ant. King. p. 319.

The war with the Chaldeans, which ended in the destruction of Babylon, seems to have commenced originally on the part of the Medes, over whom the Babylonian queen Nitocris, according to Herodotus, had kept a jealous and watchful eye. Jeremiah, chap. li. 11. 28., mentions the kings of the Medes only as raised up against Babylon, and so Isai. chap. xiii. 17., but elsewhere he joins the Elamites with them; and Thucydides generally calls the Persians Medes only. However, when Babylon was taken and subdued by the united powers of Media and Persia, Cyrus was probably induced to set over it this king of the Medes, in order to make the union of the two nations more easy, and to prepare matters better for the full establishment of the Persian empire. Cyaxares, as is generally agreed, reigned not more than two years; and during that term being only a sort of viceroy, or at least dependent upon Cyrus, the whole period of nine years is ascribed by Ptolemy to Cyrus, and no notice taken of Darius at all.

An hundred and twenty princes] According to the number of provinces which were subject to the Medo-Persian empire. These were afterwards enlarged to *an hundred and twenty-seven*, by the victories of Cambyfes and Darius Hystaspis. See Esth. i. 1. Darius divides the kingdom, and orders that an account of the whole should be rendered to the three principal officers, to whom he gives the superintendance over the rest. Darius preserved to Daniel the rank and employment which Belshazzar gave him a little before his death. Several writers have thought, that after Darius had conquered Babylon he returned to Media, and took Daniel with him; and that it was there that the establishments here spoken of were made. But, if this was not done at Babylon, it is much more likely to have been done at Shushan than in Media. See chap. viii. 2. and Calmet.

Ver. 4. Sought to find occasion] Observed Daniel, if possibly they might find any fault in him, respecting those things which pertained to the king. Houbigant.

Ver. 6. Then these presidents and princes assembled together] Came in a concourse. The true import of the verb *הָרְגִישׁוּ* *hargishu*, seems to be, "they tumultuously met;" see the margin of our English translation. The princes came in a concourse, and together assailed the king with their proposal: they forced in.

Ver.

tion of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.

8 Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.

9 Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree.

10 ¶ Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

11 Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.

12 Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any god or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.

13 Then answered they and said before

the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day.

14 Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him.

15 Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed.

16 Then the king commanded; and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.

17 And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.

18 ¶ Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him: and his sleep went from him.

Ver. 8. According to the law, &c.] There was a law in this monarchy, that no ordinance or edict, made with the necessary formalities, and with the consent of the king's counsellors, could be revoked: the king himself had no power in this case. Diodorus Siculus says, that Darius, the last king of Persia, would have pardoned Charidemus after he was condemned to death, but could not reverse the law which had passed against him. We may observe the difference of style here, and in Esth. i. 19. Here the words are, *the law of the Medes and Persians*, out of regard to the king, who was a Mede; there it is styled, *the law of the Persians and Medes*, as the king at that time was a Persian. See Calmet and Lowth.

Ver. 10. His windows being open, &c.] According to the ancient custom of the Jews, those who were in the country, or in foreign lands, turned themselves towards Jerusalem; and those who were in Jerusalem turned themselves towards the temple to pray, conformably to Solomon's consecration-prayer, 1 Kings, viii. 48, 49. *His chamber, in the Greek, is, his upper chamber.* It seems to have been the custom among the devout Jews to set apart some upper room for their oratories, as places farthest from any noise or disturbance. So we read in Tobit, that Sarah came

down from her upper chamber; and the apostles assembled in an upper room. See Calmet and Lowth. Some have observed, that there was commonly but one window, or hole in the wall made in these oratories, which opened towards Jerusalem, and is called by Jeremiah God's window. See Jer. xxii. 14. in the original, and Mark, xiv. 15.

Ver. 13. That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity] This is added to aggravate his fault: "One who was a foreigner, and brought thither as a captive, dared to offer a public affront to the laws of a king whose favour and protection he enjoyed." We cannot have a more striking instance than this relation affords us, of the power of inveterate malice, and of bitterest envy.

Ver. 17. Sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords] That neither one nor the other of the parties might separately do any thing for or against Daniel. The Vulgate reads the last clause, *That nothing might be done against Daniel*; indicating the king's desire, that the lions' den might be closed with a sealed stone, lest the lords should put Daniel to death when they found him not slain by the lions.

Ver. 18. Neither were instruments of music brought before him] Nor were sweet odours brought to him. Houbigant.

Several

19 Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.

20 And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: *and* the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?

21 Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever.

22 My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.

23 Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.

24 ¶ And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel,

and they cast *them* into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.

25 ¶ Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you.

26 I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he *is* the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion *shall be even* unto the end.

27 He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.

28 So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Several of the other versions read, *Nor was food, or provision set before him.* See Houbigant's note.

Ver. 21. O king, live for ever] *לעלמיני* *lealmin, in sacula,* or "long live the king;" an usual mode of addressing the monarch. When he in his turn addressed the people, it was, as we have seen, "Your peace be multiplied;" see ver. 25. And when the people saluted one another, it was according to the mode now practised, as Shaw tells us, among the Bedouin Arabs, "Peace be unto you." Mr. Bruce intimates, that when individuals or clans of suspected persons meet each other, if the one party pronounces this *Salam Alicum*, and it is returned by the other *Alicum Salam*, it is a sure indication that no evil is intended on either part.

Ver. 22. *And also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt*] "Thou knowest my fidelity in every thing respecting my service. If upon this occasion I have disobeyed thy orders, it was only from a sense of that duty which I owe to a much greater master."

Ver. 23. *Because he believed in his God*] Or, *Because he had believed in his God.* The author of the epistle to the Hebrews attributes to the faith of Daniel the having *stopped the mouths of lions.* The Chaldean word may signify *faith, confidence, hope.* Houbigant renders it, *Because he had hoped, or trusted in his God.*

Ver. 24. *They cast them—their children, &c.*] By the law of retaliation, which inflicted upon calumniators the same punishment that they would have brought upon others. They punished the children with their parents, as suppo-

sing that they would be infected by their ill example. We have various instances of this sort of chastisement; a sort of justice common among the Persians. Ammianus Marcellinus says, "They were abominable laws, by which "a whole family suffered for the crime of one." *Abominanda leges, per quas ob noxam unius omnis propinquitas perit.*

Ver. 26. *He is the living God*] The characters of the Deity in this and the next verse are very just and sublime, and suited to his nature, and were probably such as Darius had learnt from Daniel. Some think that he was a convert to the worship of the true God; and this, together with the favours shewn to the prophet, may in some measure account for the notice taken of his reign: many other reasons may also be assigned from a reflection on various parts of this book, and especially at chap. ix.

Ver. 28. *So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, &c.*] These two reigns are clearly distinguished. Daniel was in honour successively under the reign of five princes, Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-merodach, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus.

We cannot read this chapter, without admiring the zeal and integrity of Daniel; who, religious and devout in the midst of prosperity, continues unshaken in his principles in the greatest danger: no way intimidated by the king's edict, he continues to worship his God, and that in the most public manner, without respect to the peril whereto he was thus exposed; lest, if he had done it in secret, he might be thought to dissemble his faith, and

C H A P. VII.

Daniel's vision of four beasts, and of God's kingdom. The interpretation thereof.

[Before Christ .555.]

IN the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions

obey the king's command. Though ostentation and affectation in religious duties are on every account to be condemned; yet, on such trying occasions, we are bound to make the most public profession of our faith, without the least dissimulation, and without betraying our consciences through the fear of men. It is to be observed, that Darius was weak enough to consent to Daniel's death, though he believed him to be innocent. God did not think fit to deliver his servant by means of the king, but suffered him to be cast into the den of lions, because he designed to make his deliverance the most conspicuous possible. The Scripture says, that Daniel was thus preserved, "because innocency was found in him, and he believed in his God;" a glorious reward of his fidelity, and a noble triumph of that faith, which, when true, is always victorious. The solemn acknowledgment which the king made of the majesty of the true God engages us to adore the goodness, justice, and omnipotence of the Lord, to publish his marvellous works, and to admire the ways of his providence; who made use of this king's edict, of Nebuchadnezzar's, and that of several other heathen princes, to make his name and glory known among those idolatrous nations.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Daniel had been highly advanced by Belshazzar; and on a reverse of government he might have expected a reverse of station; but it happened quite otherwise.

1. He is preferred to the first post in the kingdom by the new emperor Darius, who probably had heard of his predictions and uncommon wisdom, and was glad to have so great a man to employ under him. In the new distribution of the empire into one hundred and twenty provinces, under the care of so many princes, three presidents were appointed to inspect the conduct of these governors, and their accounts: of these Daniel was chief. His excellent spirit was his commendation to Darius; and so well satisfied was he of his abilities and integrity, that he meditated his farther advancement, designing as viceroy to set him over the whole realm. Daniel must now be very aged, it being above seventy years since he was carried captive to Babylon; but his natural force, it seems, was not abated, and his experience was increased. It was a proof of the wisdom of Darius to make such a choice; and it was a noble testimony to the uprightiness of the minister, that no *fault was to be found in him*. Happy the nation blessed with such wise princes, and upright ministers.

2. His greatness naturally provoked the enmity of the courtiers, who, though his merit stood confessed, could not bear to see a foreigner, a Jew, a captive, thus preferred

of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters.

2 Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea.

3 And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another.

before them. Thus will superior excellence, however spotless the character, awaken the malignant passions of the corrupted heart. They eyed him with malicious acuteness, and hoped, but hoped in vain, to find some flaw in his management, which might afford a handle for accusation. Despairing at last of being able to attack him on account of his civil conduct, they can think of no method of ruining him, unless it be on account of his religion. *Note;* (1.) It is an honourable testimony when even enemies own our integrity, and, except concerning the law of our God, have no evil thing justly to say of us. (2.) The more the eyes of malignant observers are fixed upon us, the more careful should we be in the minutest particulars to walk circumspectly, and cut off occasion from those that desire occasion against us. (3.) Our fidelity to God will often expose us to the persecution of the world; but when we thus suffer, we need be neither afraid nor ashamed.

2dly, Since there was no probability of finding matter of accusation against Daniel but on account of his religion, and no law then in being seems to have restrained him from worshipping God in his own way, they craftily contrive a new one to ensnare him.

1. They make a solemn application to Darius for his approbation of a new edict, which seemed indeed to contain in it an uncommon respect for the king, but was really big with evils. They came in a body, and pretended it was the unanimous suffrage, after mature deliberation of *all the presidents*, &c., though probably many of the princes excepted to it, and *all the presidents* were but two; for Daniel, their chief, certainly consented not to it. But if the concurrence had been never so general, the matter of the request was utterly wrong, that *no man should ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of the king*, on penalty of being cast into *the lions' den*. Had it only forbidden religious worship for so long a time, it had been highly impious; but to extend the prohibition to all civil requests between man and man, must have been to the highest degree inconvenient, absurd, and unreasonable: yet as it seemed to put such distinguished honour on the king, and set him in a sort even above the gods, this court to his pride blinded his reason, and he consents and seals the decree, then become unalterable by the law of the Medes and Persians. *Note;* (1.) The malicious care not what mischief is done, so their vile spirit be gratified; let dearest friends suffer, so the object of their enmity be but ruined. (2.) It is the unhappiness of kings, that they can hardly know the truth; and, compassed with flatterers, often are accessory to evils that they never meant. (3.) Pride is our weak side; when that is attacked by flattery, we had need double our guard.

2. Daniel

4 The first *was* like a lion, and had eagles' wings: and I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the

2. Daniel persisted in his stated practice of devotion. Though he knew the decree was signed, and the penalty so fearful, he went as usual to his house, and prayed and gave thanks unto his God upon his knees three times a day, turning his face towards the temple, though in ruins, and hoping that God would remember its desolations, 1 Kings, viii. 48, 49.: nor did he seek concealment; his windows were open. Whatever precautions or excuses coward fear and selfish prudence might have dictated, he dared not submit to any thing which might dishonour God, disgrace his profession, or discourage his people: any suffering, or death itself, in his eyes was preferable to but the appearance of unfaithfulness. *Note*: (1.) In time of danger to be ashamed of Christ, or afraid to suffer for him, is the sure way to be disowned by him in the day of his appearing. (2.) What lukewarm Christians so carefully inculcate under the specious name of prudence, is for the most part base selfishness, and a treacherous betraying of the cause of God and truth. (3.) A gracious person cannot live a day without prayer and praise; and though he never kneels or sings to be seen or heard of men, he is never ashamed to be known to do so. (4.) Thrice a day Daniel prayed, notwithstanding all his occupations and engagements: can we then have a plea for a less frequent attendance on the throne of grace?

3dly, The snare was so laid, that it could not but succeed. Accordingly we have,

1. Daniel discovered acting in disobedience to the law. They knew, probably, his stated hours of devotion; and assembling tumultuously, as the word signifies, broke in upon him in the very act of prayer.

2. Without delay an impeachment is laid against him before the king. After having gained a recognition of the edict on which it was founded, they bring their accusation; and, not content with the proof of the fact, they seek by the manner of their charge to exasperate the king against him. They call Daniel *one of the captivity of Judah*; as if the despicable condition of his people, from among whom he had been preferred to such high honour, aggravated the crime of disobedience with ingratitude; and they insinuate that he did this in proud contempt of the king's authority: *He regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed.* And thus is conscientious adherence to God in the way of duty still frequently branded as obstinacy and contempt of authority; but *we believe that thou shalt come to judge the world.*

3. Too late the king perceived the fatal tendency of this impious edict, and the malicious intent of those who proposed it; *fore displeas'd* at himself for what he had done, he set his heart to deliver Daniel from the penalty that he had incurred, and laboured all day by every means to persuade his accusers to drop the prosecution, but in vain. His enemies insist that the law must have its course, according to the fundamental maxim of their government; and, though with deep reluctance, Darius is compelled to order the execution of this venerable saint, this aged sage, this upright minister, for no real crime, but for

doing that which was his highest honour, and worthy the greatest commendation. To make sure work, that no escape should be practicable, a ponderous stone is laid on the den's mouth; and, as if the king's signet thereon afforded not sufficient security, the lords added theirs also, to prevent all possibility of collusion. Thus the precautions taken to secure the body of Jesus rendered his resurrection more undeniable and notorious; so easily can God take the wife and malicious in their own craftiness.

4. The king encourages Daniel to trust in God. *Thy God, whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee*; since for no crime, but purely for fidelity to his God, he suffered, he was as able now to deliver him from the lions, as he had saved his servants of old from the devouring fire. *Note*: Let us but be faithful, and then we may safely trust our all with God.

4thly, We are told,

1. The melancholy night that Darius passed. He returned to his palace, overwhelmed with grief, vexation, and self-reproach: his appetite was gone, his ears incapable of relishing one cheerful note; fasting he passed the night, and sleepless waited in suspense the return of day. A troubled conscience puts a thorn even into a downy pillow.

2. At early dawn he springs from his bed; and, eager to know what he dreaded to ask, with a lamentable voice addresses the faithful sufferer, *O Daniel, servant, &c.* Some imagine that the king proposed this question as fluctuating between hope and despair; while others rather consider it as expressive of his astonishment and admiration, when, on the nearer approach to the den, and hearing Daniel's voice, he perceived that he was yet alive.

3. Daniel, addressing the king, recounts his miraculous deliverance. He does not upbraid Darius with giving him up into the hand of his enemies, but expresses his warmest wishes for his prosperity, *O king, live for ever! My God, in whom I trusted, hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me*; and herein God bore testimony to his innocence. Nor could the king in conscience imagine that Daniel designed him either injury or affront in what he had done. *Note*: God will stand by his faithful people in the hour of temptation; and though their souls may be among lions, he can not only keep them safe, but make their consolations abound. Daniel in the den, with the presence of that heavenly visitant, was happier far than Darius in his palace.

4. Daniel is immediately discharged. The king, transported with joy, orders him to be taken out of the den, and not a blemish was found on him, so carefully had that God in whom he believed preserved him: nor shall any who boldly trust in him have ever reason to be ashamed of their confidence.

5. Daniel's persecutors are justly consigned to that den from which he is delivered. Darius, now fully assured that it was from mere malice that they had accused him, will avenge the innocent blood which they meant to shed; and, by a fearful example of severity, to deter others from the like conspiracies, their wives and children share their

feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it.

5 And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side,

fate: when, lo! these ravening lions, who mildly crouched at the prophet's feet, with open mouths seized these miscreants as they fell, and broke all their bones ere they touched the bottom of the den. *Note*; God's justice in this world is sometimes eminently seen in suffering the malicious to fall into the pit which they have digged for others.

5thly, Darius, exceedingly affected with the miracle,

1. Issues an edict throughout his kingdom, enjoining the highest reverence and veneration for Daniel's God; that in all provinces of his empire men should *tremble and fear* before him; *for he is the living God*, self-existent, the author of life to all his creatures, and *steadfast for ever*, himself unchangeable and everlasting, and *his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end*; unlike the kingdoms of the world, it can neither be shaken by external violence, nor is subject to internal decay, but enduring as the days of eternity. *He delivereth and rescueth his faithful from the deepest afflictions, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth*, controlling at his pleasure the course of nature; an eminent instance of which had now appeared; *who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions*.

2. Daniel is restored to all his former honours and dignity, and during this whole reign continued greatly in favour with the king: and his successor Cyrus shewed him the same respect: so wonderfully can God overrule the events which seemed most grievous, for our good; and make, if he pleases, a prison like Joseph's, or a den of lions as Daniel's, the means of our greatest prosperity.

CHAP. VII.

THE historical part of the book of Daniel was finished with the last chapter; the remaining part of this book acquaints us with the visions which at different times were communicated to the prophet himself. The interval of time from the first to the last of these visions is about one or two-and-twenty years, that is to say, from the first year of Belshazzar mentioned at the beginning of this chapter to the third year of Cyrus at the beginning of chapter 10th. The first vision or dream is contained in the 7th chapter, and is the only one that is written in the Chaldee language; and perhaps the similarity of it to the dream of Nebuchadnezzar which the prophet had related and expounded at chapter ii. might have been *one* reason why this same language was here adopted; and the benefit designed by it for the impious king in whose reign it was delivered, *another*. What was *there* prefigured by a large statue, composed of various metals, is *here* pointed at by a very different sort of emblems, each suited to the disposition or character of the persons to whom the communications were made. Four beasts are, in this dream, designed to signify the four great monarchies or kingdoms, according to the interpretation of an angel; and some circumstances relating to the fourth beast are intended to adumbrate a series of events which were to reach to the latest ages of the world.

Ver. 2, 3. Behold, the four winds—strove, &c.] What

was revealed to Nebuchadnezzar concerning the four great empires of the world was again revealed to Daniel, with some additions, about forty-eight years after. But what was represented to Nebuchadnezzar in the form of a great image, was exhibited to Daniel in the shape of *great wild beasts*. The reason of this difference might be, that this image appeared with a glorious lustre in the imagination of Nebuchadnezzar, whose mind was wholly taken up with the admiration of worldly pomp and splendour; whereas the same monarchies were represented to Daniel under the shape of fierce wild beasts, as being the great supporters of idolatry and tyranny. *These great beasts*, as explained by the angel, ver. 17. are kingdoms. They arise out of a stormy and tempestuous sea; that is, out of the wars and commotions of the world; and they are called *great*, in comparison of other less states and kingdoms, as they are denominated *beasts* for their tyrannical and cruel oppression. These beasts are indeed monstrous productions; a lion, with eagle's wings; a bear, with three ribs in its mouth; a leopard, with four wings and four heads; and a beast with ten horns: but such emblems and hieroglyphics were usual among the eastern nations, as may be seen in the monuments of antiquity: a winged lion and such like fictitious animals may still be seen in the ruins of Persepolis. *Horns* are attributed to beasts which naturally have none, being used in hieroglyphic writings for the symbols of strength and power; and these figures are supposed to be the arms or symbols of particular nations, and are not more strange than several which are still used in heraldry. See Bishop Newton, vol. i. p. 441. Instead of, *Strove upon the great sea*, at the end of the second verse, Houbigant reads, *Agitated the great sea*; by which, he says, is meant Asia; the great theatre of the wars and commotions here foreseen by Daniel.

Ver. 4. The first was like a lion] This is the kingdom of the Babylonians; and the king of Babylon is in like manner compared to a lion, Jer. v. 6. and said to fly as an eagle, Jer. xlviii. 40. He is also compared to an eagle, Ezek. xvii. 3. 7. The lion is esteemed the king of beasts, and the eagle the king of birds; and therefore the kingdom of Babylon, which is described as the first and noblest kingdom, and was the greatest then in being, is said to partake of the nature of both. Instead of a *lion*, the Vulgate, Greek, and Arabic, read a *lioness*; and St. Jerome observes, that the kingdom of Babylon, for its cruelty, is compared not to a *lion*, but to a *lioness*; which, naturalists assert, is the fiercer of the two. *The eagle's wings* denote its swiftness and rapidity: and the conquests of Babylon were very rapid; that empire being advanced to its height within a few years by a single person, by the conduct and arms of Nebuchadnezzar. It is farther said, that *the wings thereof were plucked*, &c. that is to say, *it was taken away from the earth*, as it is commonly understood, and as it is rendered in almost all the ancient versions: or it may be translated, *The wings thereof were plucked, wherewith it was lifted up from the earth*; as Grotius explains it, and as we read in the margin of our Bibles; the conjunction copulative sometimes supplying the place of a relative. Its wings

and *it had* three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it : and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.

6 After this I beheld, and lo, another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl ; the beast had also four heads ; and dominion was given to it.

wings were beginning to be plucked at the time of the delivery of this prophecy ; for at this time the Medes and Persians were incroaching upon it. Belshazzar the king, now reigning, was the last of his race ; and in the seventeenth year of his reign Babylon was taken, and the kingdom transferred to the Medes and Persians. It is not easy to say what is the precise meaning of the last clause, *And made stand*, &c. It is most probable, that after the Babylonian empire was subverted, the people became humane and gentle ; their minds were humbled with their fortunes ; and they who vaunted as if they had been gods, now felt themselves to be but men. They were brought to such a sense as the inspired writer wishes, Pf. ix. 20. See Bishop Newton as above. Houbigant reads, *And it stood upon its feet, as a man* ; that is, says he, before its wings were plucked ; for the pride of Nebuchadnezzar is here marked out, who seemed in his own opinion to be above a man ; like an animal desirous to advance itself to the human condition.

Ver. 5. A second, like to a bear] These animals are not only emblems of strength and power, but must be allowed to be here used with peculiar propriety. This second, is the kingdom of the Medes and Persians ; and the largest bears were found in Media, a mountainous, rough, cold country, covered with woods. The Medes and Persians are compared to a bear, on account of their cruelty, and greediness after blood ; a bear being a most voracious and cruel animal. The resemblance between the Persians and bears has been carried to great lengths by learned authors ; who suppose them to resemble each other in their gluttony, in the remarkable length of their hair, in the restlessness of their disposition, &c. But the chief likeness consisted in what we have mentioned above ; and that this likeness was principally intended by the prophet, may be inferred from the text itself ; *Arise, devour much flesh*. A bear is called by Aristotle an omnivorous, or all-devouring animal ; and Grotius informs us, that the Medo-Persians were great robbers and spoilers ; according to Jer. li. 48. 56. See also Hai. xiii. 18. Calmet observes, that the Persians have exercised the most severe and cruel dominion that we know of. The punishments used among them beget horror in those who read them. Bishop Newton.

And it had three ribs, &c.] *And it had three throats*. Houbigant ; who observes, that these *three throats* are those by which it absorbed Cyrus, and had in its power the three empires of the Chaldeans, Medes, and Persians. These animals denote not so much kingdoms, as the founders of kingdoms ; for in the 17th verse it is said to Daniel, *These four animals are four kings*. Sir Isaac Newton and Bishop Chandler explain these *three ribs*, of the kingdoms of Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt, which were conquered by

7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly ; and it had great iron teeth : it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it : and it *was* diverse from all the beasts that *were* before it ; and it had ten horns.

this beast ; but were not properly parts and members of its body. They might be called *ribs*, says Bishop Newton, as the conquest of them much strengthened the Persian empire ; and they might be said to be *between the teeth of the bear*, as they were much grinded and oppressed by the Persians. See his *Dissertations*, vol. i. p. 446—448.

Ver. 6. Lo, another, like a leopard] This third kingdom is that of the Macedonians or Grecians, who, under the command of Alexander the Great, overcame the Persians, and reigned next after them ; and it is most fitly compared to a leopard upon several accounts. The leopard is remarkable for its swiftness ; and Alexander and the Macedonians were amazingly rapid in their conquests ; inasmuch, that St. Jerome says, he seems rather to have overrun the world by his victories, than by his battles. The leopard is a spotted animal, and so was a proper emblem of the various nations which Alexander commanded, or of the various manners of Alexander himself ; who was sometimes merciful, and sometimes cruel ; sometimes temperate, and sometimes drunken ; sometimes abstemious, and sometimes incontinent. The leopard is of small stature, but of great courage, so as not to be afraid to engage with the lion, and the largest beasts ; and so Alexander, a little king in comparison, and with a small army, dared to attack Darius, the king of kings, whose kingdom extended from the Aegean sea to the Indies. This leopard *had upon its back four wings*. The Babylonian empire was represented with *two wings*, but this is described with *four* : for nothing was swifter than Alexander's conquests, who ran through all the countries from Illyricum to the Adriatic sea, and through a great part of India ; not so much fighting, as conquering ; and in twelve years subdued part of Europe, and almost all Asia. *The beast also had four heads*, to denote the four kingdoms into which this third kingdom should be divided, as it was after the death of Alexander among his four captains ; Cassander reigning over Macedon and Greece, Lysimachus over Thrace and Bithynia, Ptolemy over Egypt, and Seleucus over Syria. *And dominion was given to it*, which shews that it was not owing to the fortitude of Alexander, but proceeded from the will of the Lord. And indeed, unless he had been directed, preserved, and assisted by the mighty power of God, how could Alexander, with 30,000 men, have overcome Darius with 600,000, and in so short a time have brought the countries from Greece as far as to India, into subjection ? Bishop Newton.

Ver. 7. Behold, a fourth beast, &c.] The fourth kingdom is represented by a fourth beast, *dreadful, terrible, and exceeding strong*. Daniel was curious to know particularly what this might mean, ver. 19, and the angel answers him, ver. 23. This kingdom can be no other than the

Roman

8 I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn *were* eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.

9 ¶ I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment *was* white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne *was like* the fiery flame, *and* his wheels *as* burning fire.

10 A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten

thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.

11 I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld *even* till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.

12 As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time.

13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

Roman empire, which answers this emphatical description better than any of the former kingdoms. *The beast devoured, and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue*, that is, the remains of the former kingdoms, *with its feet*. It reduced Macedon into a Roman province about 168 years, the kingdom of Pergamus about 133 years, Syria about 65 years, and Egypt about 30 years before Christ. And besides the remains of the Macedonian empire, it subdued many other provinces and kingdoms; so that it might, by a very usual figure, be said to *devour the whole earth, to tread it down, and break it in pieces*; and become in a manner what the Roman writers delighted to call it, "The empire of the whole world." The words of Dionysius Halicarnassus are very apposite to this subject: "The city of Rome (says he) ruleth over all the earth, as far as it is inhabited; and commands all the sea, not only that within the Pillars of Hercules, but also the ocean, as far as it is navigable; having first and alone, of all the celebrated kingdoms, made the east and west the bounds of its empire: and its dominion hath continued longer than that of any other city or kingdom." This *fourth* was *diverse from all the beasts*; and thus Rome was *different from all the kingdoms*, not only in its republican form of government, but also in power and greatness, length of duration, and extent of dominion. See Bishop Newton, Dr. Chandler's Vindication of Daniel, and the note on ver. 24.

Ver. 8. *Another little horn*] This refers to Antichrist, or the papal usurpation. See on ver. 24.

Ver. 9, 10. *I beheld till the thrones were cast down*] *Till thrones were set or placed*. The metaphors and figures here used are borrowed from the solemnities of earthly judicatures, and particularly the great Sanhedrin of the Jews; where the father of the consistory sat, with his assessors placed on each side of him, in the form of a semicircle, and the people standing before him: and probably from this description was also taken that of the day of judgment in the New Testament. See Bishop Newton. Instead of *the judgment was set*, we may read, *the council sat*.

Ver. 11. *I beheld then because of the voice, &c.*] *The beast will be destroyed, because of the great words which the horn spake*. The destruction of the beast will be the destruc-

tion of the horn also; and consequently the *horn* is a part of the fourth beast, or of the Roman empire. Bishop Newton.

Ver. 12. *As concerning the rest, &c.*] When the dominion was taken away from the *rest of the beasts*, their bodies were not destroyed, but suffered to continue still in being: but when the dominion shall be taken away from this beast, his body shall be totally destroyed, because other kingdoms succeeded to those, but none other earthly kingdom shall succeed to this. *Ibid.*

Ver. 13. *I saw in the night visions*] This has always been, and can only be, understood of the Messiah. Hence the expression, *Son of man*, was a known phrase for the Messiah among the Jews, as appears from several of their own writers. '¶¶¶ Anani, the word here used, and which signifies *clouds*, was also a known name for the Messiah; so that he who assumed the one, was supposed to affect the character of the other. This will appear evidently from what passed at the trial of our blessed Saviour. The high-priest adjuring him to declare *whether he was the Son of God*, Jesus answered him, in the words of our prophet, *Hereafter shall ye see the SON OF MAN sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven*. Every one took this for a declaration that he was the Messiah. The high-priest rent his clothes, as if he had spoken blasphemy, and the people reproached him for it. *Art thou then the Christ?—Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who struck thee?* Christ only said, that he was Daniel's *Son of man*, the *Anani*; that is to say, *He who cometh in the clouds*: the rest was their own inference, for which they could have no other foundation, than that Daniel was known to prophecy of the Messiah in this passage. *Clouds* are a known symbol of heaven, and of divine power and majesty; and the ascribing of this symbol to one like the *Son of man*, according to Saadiah Gaon, an eminent Jewish writer, "is a declaration of the supreme magnificence and authority which God shall give to that *Son of Man*, the *Messiah*." It seems, indeed, farther to imply, that this *Son of man* was *then in heaven*, when Daniel prophesied, and in high dignity before this new commission was given him. See Bishop Newton, p. 492. and Bishop Chandler's Defence, p. 107.

Ver.

14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

15 ¶ I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me.

16 I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things.

17 These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth.

18 But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.

19 Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured,

brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet;

20 And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows.

21 I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them;

22 Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.

23 Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces.

24 And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall arise after them; and he shall be diverse

Ver. 14. There was given him dominion] All these kingdoms shall in their turns be destroyed, but the kingdom of the Messiah shall stand for ever. It was in allusion to this prophecy that the angel said of Jesus before he was conceived in the womb, *He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end,* Luke, i. 33. After what manner these great changes will be finally and completely effected, we cannot at present say, but in the way of conjecture. We see the remains of the *ten horns*, which arose out of the Roman empire: (see on ver. 24.) we see the *little horn* still subsisting, though not in full strength and vigour, but, as we hope, upon the decline, and tending fast towards a dissolution. And, having seen so many of these particulars accomplished, we can have no reason to doubt that the rest also will be fulfilled in due season; though we can only conjecture at present, how Christ will be manifested in glory; how the *little horn* with the *body* of the *fourth beast*, will be given to the burning flame, or how the saints will take the kingdom, and possess it for ever. See Bishop Newton, p. 493.

Ver. 19. Diverse] Different, and so ver. 23, 24. There is no mention of the *nails of brass* in the 7th verse, where this beast is first described. But Daniel certainly would never have desired to have been informed concerning this circumstance in the beast, if he had not seen these *nails*. See Houbigant's note.

Ver. 24. The ten horns—are ten kings] Or kingdoms; and so ver. 17. If we fix the æra for these ten kingdoms to the eighth century, the chief governments will be found to be, 1. The senate of Rome, who revolted from the Grecian emperors, and claimed and exerted the privilege

of choosing a new western emperor; 2. the Greeks in Ravenna; 3. the Lombards in Lombardy; 4. the Huns in Hungary; 5. the Allemans in Germany; 6. the Franks in France; 7. the Burgundians in Burgundy; 8. the Saracens in Africa and Spain; 9. the Goths in other parts of Spain; 10. the Saxons in Britain. Not that there were constantly *ten kingdoms*; they were sometimes more and sometimes fewer: but, as Sir Isaac Newton observes, whatever was their number afterwards, they are still called the *ten kings* from their first number. Bishop Newton, p. 463.

Another shall arise after them] This is called a *little horn*, ver. 8. before whom three of the first horns were plucked up; that is to say, as is here explained, who should subdue three kings or kingdoms. The *fourth beast* signified the Roman empire; the *ten horns* represent the ten kingdoms into which that empire was divided: and if, in agreement with the fathers, we look among these *ten horns* for the *little horn*, we shall find it to be antichrist, who should root up three of the ten kings, and domineer over the rest; and who, we doubt not, will soon appear to answer in all respects the character here given. Machiavel himself, in his history of Florence, has set forth sufficient grounds to affirm this to be the *pope*. See particularly book i. p. 6. of the English translation. The bishop of Rome was respectable as a bishop long before the period that he mentions; but he did not become properly a *horn*, which is an emblem of power, till he became a temporal prince. He was to rise after the others; that is, *behind them*, as the Greek version has it; so that the ten kings were not aware of the growing up of the *little horn*, till it overtopped them; the original word signifying as well *behind*

from the first, and he shall subdue three kings.

25 And he shall speak *great* words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

26 But the judgment shall fit, and they

shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy *it* unto the end.

27 And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.

28 Hitherto *is* the end of the matter. As

behind in place, as *after* in time. *Three of the first horns*, that is three of the *first kings* or *kingdoms*, were to be *plucked up by the roots*, ver. 8. and to *fall before him*, ver. 20. and these three we conceive, with Sir Isaac Newton, to be the exarchate of Ravenna, the kingdom of the Lombards, and the state of Rome; those three states or kingdoms, which constituted the pope's dominions. The *exarchate of Ravenna* was given to Pope Stephen II. by Pepin king of France, in the year 755, and henceforward the popes, being now become temporal princes, did no longer date their epistles and bulls by the years of the *emperor's reign*, but by their *own advancement* to the *papal chair*. The kingdom of the Lombards was subdued by Charles the Great, called Charlemagne of France, who resigned his pretensions to it to St. Peter in the year 774. The *state of Rome*, both in spirituals and temporals, was vested in the pope, and confirmed to him by Lewis the Pious. These, as we conceive, were the *three horns*, or *three of the first horns which fell before the little horn*; and the pope has in a manner pointed himself out for the person by wearing the *triple crown*. In other respects too he answers to the character of the *little horn*.—He is a *little horn*;—the power of the popes was originally very small, and their temporal dominions were little and inconsiderable in comparison with others of the *ten horns*.—*He shall be diverse from the first*; which the Greek and Arabic render, “He shall exceed in wickedness all before him;” and so most of the fathers, who made use only of the Greek translation understood it: but it rather signifies that his kingdom shall be of a different nature and constitution; and the power of the popes differs greatly from that of all other princes, being an ecclesiastical and spiritual, as well as a civil and temporal authority. We are told in ver. 8. that *in this horn were eyes, like the eyes of a man*; which denotes cunning and foresight, exercised in looking out and watching all opportunities of promoting one's interest: and the policy of the Roman hierarchy has almost passed into a proverb. In ver. 8. and 20. it is said, *He had a mouth speaking great things*: and who has been more noisy and blustering than the pope, especially in former ages; boasting of his supremacy, thundering out bulls and anathemas, excommunicating princes, and absolving subjects from their allegiance?—*His look was more stout than his fellows*, ver. 20. And the pope assumes a superiority not only above his fellow bishops, but even over crowned heads; and requires his foot to be kissed, and greater honours to be paid to him than to kings and emperors themselves. See Bishop Newton, vol. i. p. 464, &c.

Ver. 25. *He shall speak great words*] Symmachus reads,

He shall speak great words, as the Most High; setting up himself above all laws divine and human; arrogating to himself godlike attributes, and titles of *holiness* and *infallibility*. Exacting obedience to his ordinances and decrees, in preference to, and in open violation of reason and Scripture; insulting men and blaspheming God. In Gratian's Decretals, the pope has the title of *god* given to him!

And shall wear out the saints] By wars, and massacres, and inquisitions, persecuting and destroying the faithful servants of Jesus, and the true worshippers of God, who protest against his innovations, and refuse to comply with the idolatry practised in the court of Rome. Instead of, *wear out*, Houbigant reads, *lie in wait for*, or *form schemes of deceit against*. *He shall think to change times and laws*;—appointing fasts and feasts, canonizing saints, granting pardons and indulgences for sins, instituting new modes of worship, imposing new articles of faith, enjoining new rules of practice, and reversing at pleasure the laws of God and man.

And they shall be given, &c.] *A time*, all agree, signifies a year, and a *time and times*, and *the dividing of time*, or *half a time*, are three years and a half: the ancient Jewish year consisting of twelve months, and each month of thirty days; a *time*, and *times*, and *half a time*, are reckoned in Rev. xi. 2, 3. xii. 6. 14. as equivalent to *forty-two months*, or a *thousand two hundred and threescore days*: and a *day*, in the style of the prophets, is a year. This is expressly asserted, Ezek. iv. 6. and it is confessed, that the *seventy weeks*, in chap. ix. of this book, are weeks of years, and consequently one thousand two hundred and sixty days are one thousand two hundred and sixty years. So long antichrist, or the *little horn*, will continue; but from what point of time the commencement of these twelve hundred and sixty years is to be dated, is not so easy to determine. It should seem that they are to be computed from the full establishment of the power of the pope; and no less is implied in the expression *given into his hand*.

Ver. 26. *But the judgment shall fit*] *Then the judgment, &c.* The reference seems, ultimately at least, to the future and final judgment; “The destruction of the impious shall be eternal.” But before this, shall all the earthly kingdoms be destroyed, Ezekiel's prophecy in chap. xxxviii. and xxxix. against Gog in the land of Magog be fulfilled, the kingdom of Christ be restored, and the church's ascendancy over all the earth be established; and, as it follows in the next verse, the saints of the Most High shall receive a very extensive dominion, which shall commence here on earth, and be continued for ever and ever. See ver. 18. and Rev. v. 10.

Ver.

for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but

I kept the matter in my heart.

Ver. 28. My cogitations much troubled me, &c.] My thoughts, &c. Daniel was much troubled, and his countenance changed in him, at the foresight of the calamities to be brought upon the church by the little horn. But he kept the matter in his heart. Much more may good men now be grieved at these calamities, and lament the prevalence of popery, infidelity, and wickedness in the world. But let them keep it in their heart, that a time of just retribution will certainly come. The proof may be drawn from the moral attributes of God, as well as from his promises in ver. 26, 27. The judgment shall sit, &c. See Bishop Newton, vol. i. p. 497.

A general and compendious view of these things might be all which either in prudence or propriety was then expedient to be given to the nations, for their own benefit, or that of the dispersed Israelites who resided among them; but a more exact and particular prospect might be held out for those highly-favoured people, who were to constitute the restored visible church of Christ, and from whom was to descend the promised Messiah, who was to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to spread salvation unto the ends of the earth.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The date of this vision is in the first year of Belshazzar. It was revealed to Daniel on his bed in a dream, and when he awoke he wrote it down, and communicated it to his brethren whom it so nearly concerned. They were about to be delivered from their long captivity; but must not expect uninterrupted tranquillity, as they perhaps flattered themselves, in the land to which they were about to return.

In the vision he observed,

1. The four winds strove upon the great sea, and the effect of such a furious storm must needs be the most violent agitation. This sea is either Asia or the whole world with its inhabitants, the winds the monarchs of the earth contending for mastery, and filling it with violence and confusion.

2. From this forming ocean came up four great beasts, in figure different from each other, representing the four great monarchies, and the different genius of the people by whom they were erected.

[1.] *The first was like a lion, which was the Babylonish monarchy, strong and despotic; and had eagles' wings, intimating the rapidity of Nebuchadnezzar's conquests; but the wings were soon plucked, with which it was lifted up from the earth; for under his successors the empire began to be dismembered and weakened; they lost their courage and intrepidity, and the lion's heart was changed into a man's.*

[2.] *The second beast was like to a bear, representing the Medo-Perfian monarchy, fierce and savage; and it raised up itself on one side, on the side of Persia, whence Cyrus the conqueror came; and it had three ribs in the mouth of it, between the teeth of it, so many kingdoms or provinces; and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh; either the generals of the Persian army encouraged their troops*

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to slay their enemies, or these are the orders of the divine Providence to Cyrus, sending him to devour the spoils of the conquered Chaldeans.

[3.] *The third beast, that next arose, was like a leopard, prefiguring the Grecian monarchy under Alexander, agile, crafty, spotted, a compound of vices and virtues; or this may refer to the motley people of this vast empire. It had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; so swift were his marches, so rapid his conquests. The beast had also four heads; the empire, on Alexander's decease, being divided into four parts. See the annotations. And dominion was given to it; God's hand being strongly evident in the successes of the Grecian conqueror.*

[4.] *The fourth beast differed from all the rest, being dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly, which is to be interpreted of the Roman empire; and it had great iron teeth, devouring, breaking in pieces, and stamping down all who stood in its way; as the Roman generals and armies did, till they had erected universal monarchy. And it had ten horns; the empire, on its decline, being divided into so many kingdoms. The little horn, is by the best interpreters supposed to be the antichristian power, which rose from small beginnings, and from an ecclesiastic the bishop of Rome became a temporal prince, and seized on considerable territories, dispossessing three of the other horns. And in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, intimating the vigilance and craft of the Romish court and emissaries; and a mouth speaking great things, boasting of infallibility, power to remit sin, and other such like proud blasphemies.*

2dly, Very glorious things are here recorded, for the comfort of the people of God under all the persecutions that they may be called to suffer in this wicked world.

1. An awful judge makes his appearance. *I beheld till the thrones were cast down; all these monarchies successively overturned: or it may be read till the thrones were set up; the thrones of judgment, the thrones of God and the Lamb: and this may point either at his providential judgments on all the enemies of his church in this world, or his final and eternal judgment at the great day of his appearing and glory. And the Ancient of days did sit; God the Father, the judge of all: his garment was white as snow, denoting his perfect righteousness, and that his bosom is the seat of justice; and the hair of his head like the pure wool, venerable and majestic: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire; so piercing his scrutiny, so swift the execution of his sentence, and so terrible his wrath: a fiery stream issued and came forth from before him, to consume his adversaries; thousand thousands ministered unto him, angels and archangels; and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him, waiting from his lips their eternal doom. The judgment was set, the court ready to hear and determine; and the books were opened, the book of revelation, the book of omniscience, the book of conscience, in allusion to proceedings in courts of human judicature.*

2. The prisoner at the bar is condemned and executed.

3 I

I beheld

C H A P. VIII.

Daniel's vision of the ram and he-goat. The two thousand three hundred days of sacrifice. Gabriel comforteth Daniel, and interpreteth the vision.

[Before Christ 553.]

IN the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, *even*

unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first.

2 And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I *was* at Shushan *in* the palace, which *is* in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai.

I beheld then, because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake, his pride and blasphemies being proved, and condign punishment decreed; I beheld, even till the beast was slain, the Romish power; and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame; Rome, the seat of antichristian tyranny, being not improbably doomed to be devoured with fire; but, according to the express declaration of Scripture, both the beast and the false prophet will together at last be cast into the burning lake. See Rev. xvii. xviii. xix. As concerning the rest of the beasts, the other three monarchies, they had their dominion taken away, successively giving place to each other; yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time; though the sovereign power departed from them, they each continued in being as a people; whereas, when judgment passes on the fourth, he will perish at once and utterly.

3. The kingdom of the Messiah is to be set up on the ruin of his enemies. *I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the son of man, like the sons of men in his incarnation, but more than man in the glory of his divine Person, came with the clouds of heaven, with great majesty, to take possession of his kingdom, and came to the Ancient of days, his eternal Father, either at his ascension, or rather it refers to the future day of his glory, when he shall take to himself his great power and reign; and they brought him near before him; and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, his mediatorial kingdom, which, as the man Christ Jesus, he receives from his Father; and this kingdom, we doubt not, will be more eminent and extensive upon earth hereafter than it has ever yet been; so that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him, made obedient to the faith, and become his loyal subjects: and, as his kingdom will be universal in its extent, it will be eternal in duration; for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. Blessed and happy are they who have their lot and portion among the happy subjects of this divine Redeemer!*

3dly, The visions so affected the prophet, that his mind was much troubled; and, earnestly desirous to be informed of the meaning of what he saw, he inquires of one of the celestial attendants concerning them; who readily relieved him from his suspense, and explained the particulars of his prophetic dream. *Note;* (1.) When we are ignorant, we should never be ashamed to inquire of those who can teach us. (2.) The truths of God should engage our diligent attention; and what we read or hear, we should, by prayer and meditation, endeavour fully to understand.

The interpretation given is,

1. That the four beasts are four kings, or kingdoms, which should arise out of the earth, and, springing from the dust, should return thither again: but a fifth should

succeed them, of heavenly original, and endure for ever and ever; as he more fully afterwards explains.

2. As Daniel was most solicitous to have a fuller explication of the meaning of the fourth beast, which seemed the fiercest of them all, and of the ten horns, and the little horn that sprung up afterwards, which had eyes, and a mouth that spake great things, and his *look was more stout than his fellows*; which made war against the saints of the most High, and prevailed, till the Ancient of days came, vindicated their cause, and slew their adversary; the angel informs him, that this terrible beast is the fourth kingdom, meaning, I doubt not, the Roman monarchy, to which the characters given seem most exactly to agree. It was diverse from all the other kingdoms in its form of government; it trod down and devoured the whole earth, by long and bloody wars subduing the nations which refused to submit. The ten horns are ten kings, or kingdoms, which arose on the decline of the empire, when the Huns, Goths, Alans, and other northern nations, successively dismembered the empire, and erected these ten separate kingdoms: and though learned interpreters reckon differently, they agree in the grand points, that these ten kingdoms were erected by them, and here represented by the ten horns. The little horn is the papal power, arising to its height after this division of the empire, *speaking great things*, pretending to be Christ's vicar upon earth, and assuming the incommunicable prerogatives of the most High; and in *look more stout than his fellows*, the head of that power assuming authority, not only over all his fellow-bishops, but over all kings and princes. He is diverse from the other monarchs, having the ecclesiastical as well as civil dominion, and ruling over the consciences as well as persons of his subjects. *He shall subdue three kings.* See the annotations. *And he shall speak great words against the most High*, the words of blasphemy, affecting such authority and spiritual powers as if he was God upon earth. By wars and persecutions, and inquisitorial dungeons, he *shall wear out the saints of the most High*, endeavouring to weary out their patience and bring them under his yoke; and he shall *think to change times and laws*, affecting to depose and set up kings at his pleasure, to alter the constitution of kingdoms, consecrating particular times and seasons, dispensing with the laws of God and man, and binding his own upon the consciences of men: *and they shall be given into his hand*; he shall for a while succeed in his usurpations; *until a time and times, and the dividing of time*; three years and a half; the same with the 1260 days, and the forty-two months, Rev. xi. 2, 3. xii. 14. xiii. 5. during which the tyranny of Antichrist shall more or less prevail. But God will at last judge this persecuting power, and utterly destroy it, setting up on its ruins the kingdom

3 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had *two* horns: and the *two* horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last.

4 I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great.

kingdom of his Christ, whose people shall then reign with him, enjoying freely all privileges and ordinances without disturbance, and seeing all their enemies made their foot-stool. And this some refer to a temporal reign of the saints upon earth, under Christ their head; others to the reign of grace in the souls of the faithful redeemed, and the universal spread of the Gospel in the world at the latter day; others to the kingdom of the Redeemer in heaven, when, after the last judgment, his saints shall reign with him in glory everlasting. In whichever sense it be taken, the prospect is truly glorious, and suited to support the faith, the patience, and constancy of his people, even in the darkest times.

3. Daniel appears much impressed and affected with what had been told him: his very look was altered by it; but he kept the matter in his heart, pondering thereupon, and seeking thoroughly to understand the meaning, that he might transmit the vision, with the interpretation, to succeeding generations. *Note*; It is good thus to store up in our hearts the blessed words of truth that we hear, ready to produce them, on every proper occasion, for the edification and comfort of our brethren.

C H A P. VIII.

THIS chapter contains the vision of the ram and of the he-goat; or an account of the Persian and Grecian monarchies; the explanation of the vision by the angel Gabriel; the persecutions of the Jews in the profanation of their temple and removal of the daily sacrifice, and the continuance of the troubles for 2300 days, till the sanctuary should be cleansed; with a reference also to the persecutions and profanations of antichrist.

Ver. 1. In the third year of—king Belshazzar] This vision was about five hundred and fifty-three years before Christ. From chap. ii. 4. to this chapter, the prophecies are written in Chaldee. As they greatly concerned the Chaldeans, so they were published in that language. But the remaining prophecies are written in Hebrew, because they treat altogether of affairs subsequent to the time of the Chaldeans, and no ways relate to them, but principally to the church and people of God. See Bishop Newton's Dissertation, vol. ii. p. 1, &c.

Ver. 2. And I saw in a vision, &c.] Houbigant renders this very properly, *And I saw myself in the vision to be by the river Ulai*; for Daniel was at Shushan when he had this vision, wherein he imagined himself to be by the river *Ulai*; which divides Susiana from Elam, properly so called; though *Elam* is often taken in a larger sense, so as to comprehend Susiana.

Ver. 3. A ram which had two horns] In the former vision there appeared four beasts, because there four empires were represented; but here *two* only, because here we have a representation of what was transacted chiefly

within *two* empires. The *first* of the four empires, that is, the Babylonian, is wholly omitted here; for its fate was sufficiently known, and it was now drawing very near to a conclusion. The second empire in the former vision, is the first in this; and what is there compared to a *bear*, is here prefigured by a *ram*. *This ram had two horns*, and, according to the explication of the angel Gabriel, ver. 20. it was the empire of the Medes and Persians. The source of this figure of *horns* for *kingdoms*, must be derived from the hieroglyphics of Egypt, from which most of the metaphors and figures in the oriental languages were originally derived; and in these languages, the same word signifies a *horn*, a *crown*, *power*, and *splendour*; whence a *horn* was an ensign of royalty among the Phœnicians; and the Hebrew word קֶרֶן *keren*, signifying a *horn*, is several times by the Chaldee rendered מַלְכוּתָא *malkuta*, or a *kingdom*; and horns are frequently used for *kings* and *kingdoms* in the Old Testament. This empire therefore, which was formed by the conjunction of the Medes and Persians, was not unfitly represented by a *ram with two horns*. Cyrus, the founder of this empire, was the son of Cambyses king of Persia, and by his mother Mandane was grandson of Astyages king of Media: and afterwards, marrying the daughter and only child of his uncle Cyaxares, king of Media, he succeeded to both crowns, and united the kingdoms of Media and Persia. It was a coalition of two very formidable powers, and therefore it is said that *the two horns were high; but one, it is added, was higher than the other, and the higher came up last*. The kingdom of Media was the more ancient of the two, and more famous in history: Persia was of little note or account till the time of Cyrus; but under him the Persians gained and maintained the ascendant. But a question remains, why that empire, which was before likened to a *bear* for its cruelty, should now be represented by a *ram*? The propriety of it will appear, if we consider, that it was usual for the king of Persia to wear a *ram's head* made of gold, and set with precious stones, instead of a diadem. We may add that a *ram's head with horns*, one higher and the other *lower*, was the royal ensign of the Persians, and is still to be seen on the pillars of Persepolis. See Newton, vol. ii. p. 5. Bishop Chandler's Vindication, p. 154. and Dr. Sharpe's Sermon on the Rise and Fall of Jerusalem, p. 46. in the note.

Ver. 4. Pushing westward, and northward, and southward] Westward, that is, subduing Babylonia, Syria, and Asia Minor, under the reign of Cyrus, and extending to part of Greece under that of his successors, Darius the son of Hystaspes, and Xerxes. Northward; the same Darius, according to Herodotus and Justin, carried his arms into the territories of the Scythians, beyond the Caspian Sea; and the Lydians, Armenians, Cappadocians, Iberians, &c. were subject to Persia. Southward; the Persians

5 And as I was considering, behold, an he-goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes.

6 And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power.

7 And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand.

8 Therefore the he-goat waxed very great:

extended their conquests over Arabia, India, Egypt, and Ethiopia, which last was entered by Cambyses the son and successor of Cyrus; and the Persian empire was very much enlarged and extended under the victorious arms of its first monarchs.

Ver. 5. An he-goat came from the west] This is interpreted ver. 21. to be the king, or kingdom of Grecia. A goat is very properly made the type of the Grecian or Macedonian empire, because the Macedonians at first, about two hundred years before Daniel, were denominated *Ægeada* or the goat's people. The reason of their being so named is thus assigned. Caranus, their first king, going with a multitude of Greeks to seek new habitations in Macedonia, was commanded by the oracle to take the goats for his guides to empire; and afterwards seeing a herd of goats flying from a violent storm, he followed them to Edessa, and there fixed the seat of his empire, made the goats his ensigns or standards, and called the place *Æge*, or *Ægea*, that is to say, *The Goat's Town*, and the people, *Ægeada*, or *The Goat's People*; names which allude to, and are derived from the Greek word *αἴξ* [*aix*] a goat. To this may be added, that the city *Ægæ* or *Æge* was the usual burying-place for the Macedonian kings. It is also remarkable, that Alexander's son by Roxana was surnamed Alexander *Ægus*, or the son of the goat. Alexander himself ordered the statuaries to represent him with a horn upon his head, that he might appear to be the son of Jupiter Ammon; and some of Alexander's successors are represented in their coins with goat's horns. This he-goat came from the west; and who is ignorant that Europe lies westward of Asia? He came on the face of the whole earth, carrying every thing before him in all the three parts of the world then known. And he touched not the ground: his marches were so swift, and his conquests so rapid, that he might be said, in a manner, to fly over the whole earth without touching it. For the same reason, the same empire in chap. vii. was likened to a leopard, which is a swift noble animal; and, to denote the greater quickness and impetuosity, to a leopard with four wings. And the he-goat had a notable horn between his eyes. This horn, says the angel, is the first king, or kingdom, of the Greeks, in Asia, which was erected by Alexander the Great, and continued some years in his brother Philip Aridæus, and his two young sons, Alexander *Ægus*, and Hercules. See Bishop Newton, p. 9, &c. Dr. Sharpe's Rise and Fall, &c. p. 47. and Prideaux's Connection, part ii. book viii. ann. 330.

Ver. 6, 7. He came to the ram, &c.] In these two verses we have an account of the Grecians overthrowing the

Persian empire. The ram had before, ver. 4. pushed westward; and the Persians, in the reign of Darius Hytaspis and Xerxes, had poured down with great armies into Greece: but now the Greeks in return carried their arms into Asia, and the he-goat invaded the ram that had invaded him. And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. We can hardly read these words without having some image of Darius's army standing and guarding the river Granicus, and of Alexander on the other side, with his forces plunging in, swimming across the stream, and rushing on the enemy with all the fire and fury which can be conceived. And I saw him close unto the ram: he had several close engagements or set battles with the king of Persia, and particularly at the Granicus in Phrygia, at the straits of Issus in Cilicia, and in the plains of Arbela in Assyria. And he was moved with choler against him, for the cruelties which the Persians had exercised against the Greeks, and for Darius's attempting sometimes to corrupt his soldiers to betray him, and sometimes his friends to destroy him; so that he would not listen to the most advantageous offers of peace, but determined to pursue the Persian king, not as a generous and noble enemy, but as a prisoner and a murderer, to the death which he deserved. And he smote the ram, and brake his two horns: he subdued Persia and Media, with other provinces and kingdoms of the Persian empire; and it is remarkable, that in Persia he barbarously sacked and burned the royal city of Persepolis, the capital of the empire; and in Media Darius was seized and made prisoner by some of his own treacherous subjects, who not long afterwards basely murdered him.—And there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: he conquered wherever he came; routed all their forces, took all the cities and castles, and intirely subverted and ruined the Persian empire. And there was none that could deliver him out of his hand; not even his numerous armies could defend the king of Persia, though his forces in the battle of Issus amounted to six hundred thousand men; and in that of Arbela, to ten or eleven hundred thousand; whereas the whole number of Alexander's was not more than forty-seven thousand in either engagement. See Bishop Newton, vol. ii. p. 13.

Ver. 8. The he-goat waxed very great, &c.] This the angel interprets, ver. 22. The empire of the goat was in its full strength when Alexander died. He was succeeded by his natural brother Philip Aridæus, and by his two sons, Alexander *Ægus* and Hercules; but in the space of about fifteen

and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven.

9 And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land.

10 And it waxed great, even to the host of

heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them.

11 Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down.

12 And an host was given him against the

fifteen years they were all murdered, and the first horn or kingdom was intirely broken. The royal family being thus extinct, the governors of provinces, who had before usurped the power, usurped the title of kings, and by the defeat and death of Antigonus, in the battle of Issus, were reduced to four; Cassander, Lyfimachus, Ptolemy, and Seleucus, who parted Alexander's dominions between them, and divided and settled them into four kingdoms. These four kingdoms are the four notable horns which came up in the room of the first great horn, and are the same as the four heads of the leopard, ch. vii. Four kingdoms shall stand up,—but not in his power: they were to be kingdoms of Greeks, not of Alexander's own family, but only of his nation: neither were they to be equal to him in power and dominion; as an empire united is certainly more powerful than the same divided, and the whole greater than any of its parts. They were likewise to extend towards the four winds of heaven; and in the partition of the empire Cassander held Macedon and Greece, and the western parts; Lyfimachus had Thrace, Bithynia, and the northern regions; Ptolemy possessed Egypt, and the southern countries; and Seleucus obtained Syria, and the eastern provinces. See Bishop Newton, p. 27.

Ver. 9—12. Out of one of them came forth a little horn, &c.] There are two ways of expounding this prophecy of the little horn; either by understanding it with the generality of interpreters, both Jewish and Christian, ancient and modern, of Antiochus Epiphanes, and considering Antiochus as a type of antichrist; or by leaving him wholly out of the question, and seeking another application. Now a horn, in the style of Daniel, does not signify any particular king, but is an emblem of a kingdom; and the little horn, in the former chapter, did not signify a single person, but a succession of persons claiming such prerogatives and exerting such powers as are there specified. In this vision likewise the two horns of the ram do not represent two kings, Darius the Mede, and Cyrus the Persian, but the two kingdoms of Media and Persia; and for this plain reason, because the ram had all along two horns, even when he was attacked by the he-goat; but the two kingdoms of Media and Persia had been long united under one king. The horns of the he-goat prefigure not kings, but kingdoms. The first great horn does not typify Alexander himself, but the kingdom of Alexander, as long as the title continued united in him and his brother and two sons. The four horns which arose after the first was broken, are expressly said, ver. 22. to be four kingdoms; and consequently it should seem that the little horn cannot signify Antiochus Epiphanes, or any

single king, but must denote some kingdom; by kingdom meaning, what the ancients meant thereby, any government, whether monarchy or republic, or of what form soever. Now what kingdom was there which rose up during the subsistence of the four kingdoms of the Grecian empire, and was advanced to any greatness and eminence, but the Roman?—The general character certainly is better adapted to the Romans than to any other; let us then consider the particular properties and actions of this little horn. Out of one of the four kingdoms came forth, &c. This was applicable to the Romans, who were a new and different power, who rose up from small beginnings, to be an exceeding great empire; who first subdued Macedon and Greece, the capital kingdom of the goat, and hence enlarged their conquests over the rest. In this vision the Roman empire is not designed at large, but only the Roman empire as a horn of the goat. When the Romans first got footing in Greece, then they became this horn of the goat; out of this horn they came, and were at first a little horn, but in process of time overtopped the other horns. From Greece they extended their arms, and overran the other parts of the goat's dominion; and their actions within the dominions of the goat, and not their affairs in the western empire, are the principal subject of this prophecy. This horn, though little at first, waxed exceeding great, &c. It was to rise up in the north-west parts of those nations which composed the body of the goat, and thence was to extend its dominion towards Egypt, Syria, and Judæa. He waxed great; and so did the Roman empire, even within the territories of the goat.—Toward the south; the Romans made Egypt a province of their empire, and kept possession of it for several centuries: Toward the east also the Romans grew very powerful; conquering and making Syria a province, which was the eastern kingdom of the goat. And toward the pleasant land; that is, Judæa; for so it is called Ps. cvi. 24. Jer. iii. 19. and ch. xi. 16. 41. The Romans conquered and subdued the Jews; first made a province of their country, and then destroyed their city and temple, and dispersed the people; so that after so fatal a fall, they have never hitherto been able to rise again. The remainder of the prophecy relates chiefly to the persecution and oppression of the people of God. And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven, &c. By the stars are meant the Jewish state in general, (the mighty and the holy people, ver. 24.) or the priests and Levites in particular; who are called stars, as they were eminent for their station, and illustrious for their knowledge; and the host of heaven, as they watched and served in the temple, and their service is denominated a warfare. See Numb. viii. 24. in the original. Our Sa-
viour

daily *sacrifice* by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered.

13 ¶ Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain *saint* which spake, How long *shall* be the vision concerning the daily *sacrifice*, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?

14 And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.

15 ¶ And it came to pass, when I, *even* I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man.

16 And I heard a man's voice between *the banks of Ulai*, which called, and said, Ga-

briel, make this *man* to understand the vision.

17 So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end *shall* be the vision.

18 Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright.

19 And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end *shall* be.

20 The ram which thou sawest having *two* horns *are* the kings of Media and Persia.

21 And the rough goat *is* the king of Grecia: and the great horn that *is* between his eyes *is* the first king.

viour making use of the same expressions, Matth. xxiv. 29. in speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, this passage also may be more properly referred to that event. *Yea, he magnified himself,—and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, &c.* The Romans *took away the daily sacrifice* for many ages, and utterly destroyed the temple. The word *מָסַח* *tsaba*, translated *host*, ver. 12. is rendered in ch. x. 1. and Job, vii. 1. an *appointed time*; accordingly, the verse may be read, *An appointed time was given against the daily sacrifice, &c.* or, *The host was given over for the transgressions against the daily sacrifice; and he cast down,—and he practised, &c.* When the city of Jerusalem was besieged and taken by the Romans, the number of the captives amounted to 97,000, and of the slain to 1,100,000: and they carried their conquests and revenge so far, as to put an end to the government of the Jews, and entirely *to take away their place and nation*. See Bishop Newton, p. 31, &c. Instead of *pleasant land*, at the end of the 9th verse, Houbigant reads *the west*, after the Arabic; denoting Judæa, which lay in the west of Asia.

Ver. 12. *And an host was given him] Moreover, a ministry was delivered to him against, &c.—He cast the truth to the ground, and whatever he undertook, it prospered.* Houbigant.

Ver. 13. *How long shall be the vision concerning, &c.]* There is no word for *concerning* in this verse, which may be rendered more properly, *For how long time shall the vision last, the daily sacrifice be taken away, and the transgression of desolation continue?* After the same manner the question is translated in the LXX, Arabic, and Vulgate. See Bishop Newton.

Ver. 14. *Unto two thousand and three hundred days] In the original, Unto two thousand and three hundred mornings and evenings; an evening and a morning being the Hebrew notation of time for a day. See ver. 26. Now these 2300 days can by no computation be accommodated to the*

times of Antiochus Epiphanes, even though the days be taken for natural days. The days, without doubt, are to be taken, agreeably to the style of Daniel in other places, not for natural, but for prophetic days or years; and as the question was asked, not only how long the daily sacrifices should be taken away, and the transgression of desolation continue, but also how long the vision should last; so the answer is to be understood: and these 2300 days denote the whole time from the beginning of the vision to the cleansing of the sanctuary. The *sanctuary* is not yet cleansed, and consequently these years are not expired. It is difficult to fix the precise time when the prophetic dates begin and end, till the prophecies are fulfilled: but it appears to me that the 2300 days should be computed from the vision of the *he-goat*, or Alexander's invading Asia. Alexander invaded Asia in the year of the world 3670 (according to the common calculation, which may in some degree be erroneous), and before Christ 334. Two thousand and three hundred years from that time will draw towards the conclusion of the sixth millennium of the world. See Bishop Newton. But I shall speak more on this subject when we come to the Revelation.

Ver. 17. *For at the time of the end, &c.] For the vision shall have an end at its proper time.* Houbigant; and so ver. 19.

Ver. 19. *In the last end] Even unto the end, or, in the latter time.*

Ver. 21. *The king of Grecia] Rather, the kingdom, and so at ver. 20. Hebrew יָוָן *yavan*, from Javan the son of Japheth, Gen. x. 2. The whole states of Greece were sometimes called Ionæ, and the sea which washes their borders is the Ionian sea. Yet there seems to have been a distinction made by the Hebrews between the Peloponnesian and the Ionian Greece; but Macedonia certainly belonged to the latter; and Alexander might with the greatest propriety be styled the first king of Ion, as he*

was

22 Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power.

23 And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up.

24 And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy won-

derfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people.

25 And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify *himself* in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.

was the first and chief who subdued the Medo-Perfic, and established the Grecian empire.

Ver. 22. Four kingdoms shall stand up, &c.] Does not this imply that the remaining kingdom, the kingdom of the little horn, should not be of the nation? Newton, p. 33. Houbigant reads, *Four kingdoms shall arise out of this nation, but not of so great power.*

Ver. 23. In the latter time, &c.] The Romans might be said to stand up in the latter time, &c. who saw the end not only of one kingdom, but of all four; who first subdued the kingdom of Macedon and Greece; then inherited, by the will of Attalus, the kingdom of Lyfimachus; and afterwards made a province of the kingdom of Syria; and lastly, of the kingdom of Egypt. When the Romans stood up too, the transgressions were come to the full; for the high-priesthood was exposed to sale: good Onias was ejected for a sum of money, to make room for wicked Jason, and Jason again was supplanted for a greater sum of money by a worse man, if possible, than himself,—his brother Menelaus; and the golden vessels of the temple were sold to pay for the sacrilegious purchase. At the same time the customs of the heathens were introduced, the youth were trained up and exercised after the manner of the Greeks; and the people, and even the priests, apostatized from the true religion. See 2 Macc. iv. 14. Nay, Jerusalem was taken by Antiochus, 40,000 Jews were slain, and as many were sold into slavery; the temple was profaned, even under the conduct of the high-priest Menelaus, was defiled with swine's blood, and plundered of every thing valuable: and in the same year that Paulus Æmilius, the Roman consul, vanquished Perseus, the last king of the Macedonians, and thereby put an end to that kingdom, the Jewish religion was put down, and the heathen worship set up in the cities of Judæa and Jerusalem; the temple itself was consecrated to Jupiter Olympius, and his image was erected upon the very altar. Then indeed the transgressions were come to the full. See Bishop Newton.

A king of fierce countenance] A king, in the prophetic style, is the same as kingdom. Instead of understanding dark sentences, the Syriac translates *skilful of ruling*, and the Arabic, *skilful of disputations*. We may suppose the meaning to be, that this should be a politic and artful, as well as a formidable power; which properly characterizes the Romans. They were represented in the former vision by a beast dreadful and terrible; and for the same reason they are here signified by a king of fierce countenance. Whether this character belongs to the Romans, or to Antiochus

Epiphanes, may be collected from the following narrative. Antiochus was engaged in a war with Egypt, and in a fair way of making himself master of it. The Romans, therefore, looking upon his increasing power with a jealous eye, sent an embassy to him, to require him to desist from his enterprize, or else to declare against him. Popilius, the chief of the ambassadors, had formerly been his friend; and the king, at their first meeting near Alexandria, offered him his hand, in remembrance of their former friendship. This Popilius declined, saying, that private friendship must give place to the public welfare, and he must first know whether the king was a friend to the Roman state, before he could acknowledge him as a friend to himself: he then presented to him the tables, which contained the decree of the senate, and desired an immediate answer. Antiochus, after reading them, replied, that he would communicate them to his friends, and return him an answer very speedily; but Popilius, with a wand which he carried in his hand, drew a circle round the king, and insisted upon his answer before he stirred out of that circle. The king, astonished at this peremptory manner of proceeding, after some hesitation, said he would obey the commands of the senate; and then at length Popilius reached forth his hand to him. This incident happened soon after the conquest of Macedonia; and being the first memorable action of the Romans immediately on their becoming a horn of the kingdom of the goat, it is very fitly said of them, and more fitly than of Antiochus, *A king of fierce countenance shall stand up*. See Bishop Newton.

Ver. 24. His power shall be mighty, &c.] This part of the prophecy can no where be so justly applied as to the Romans. With them it quadrates exactly, and with none of the other horns or kingdoms of the goat. The strength of the other kingdoms consisted in themselves, and had its foundation in some part of the goat: but the Roman empire, as a horn, or kingdom of the goat, was not mighty by its own power, was not strong by virtue of the goat; but drew its nourishment and strength from Rome and Italy. There grew the trunk and body of the tree, though the branches extended over Greece, Asia, Syria, and Egypt. See Bishop Newton.

Ver. 25. He shall also stand up against the Prince of princes] If by the prince of princes, the high-priest be meant, the Romans abolished the whole administration of that priesthood. If the Messiah be meant, it was effected by the Romans. It was indeed by the malice of the Jews, but by the authority of the Romans, that he was put to death; and

26 And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days.

27 And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it.

and he suffered the punishment of the Roman malefactors and slaves. And indeed it is very worthy of our consideration, whether this part of the prophecy be not a sketch of the fate and sufferings of the Christian, as well as of the Jewish church. Nothing is more usual with the prophets than to describe the religion and worship of later times, by figures borrowed from their own religion. The Christians may full as well as the Jews be comprehended under the name of *holy people*, or *people of the holy ones*. The Romans not only crucified our Saviour, but also persecuted his disciples for above three centuries; and when at length they embraced the Christian religion, they soon corrupted it; so that it may be questioned, whether their favour was not as hurtful to the church as their enmity. As the power of the Roman emperors declined, that of the Roman pontiff increased: and may it not with equal truth and justice be said of the latter, as of the former, that *they cast down the truth to the ground*? How applicable in this sense is every part of the angel's interpretation, in this and the two former verses! and this farther opens and explains the appellations of the *little horn*. The persecuting power of Rome, whether exercised towards the Jews, or towards the Christians, by the emperors, or by the popes, is still the *little horn*. Their tyranny is the same; but as exerted in Greece and the east, it is the *little horn* of the *he-goat*, or the third empire; as exerted in Italy and the west, it is the *little horn* of the *fourth beast*, or the fourth empire. See Bishop Newton.

He shall be broken without hand] As the *stone*, in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, *was cut out of the mountain without hands*; that is to say, not by human but by supernatural means; so the *little horn*, shall be broken without hand; shall not die the common death; nor fall by the hand of men, but perish by a stroke from heaven. And this agrees perfectly with the former predictions of the fatal catastrophe of the Romans, chap. ii. 34. vii. 11. 26. All which implies, that the dominion of the Romans shall finally be destroyed by some extraordinary manifestation of the divine power. By thus retracing the particulars of this remarkable prophecy, it appears, that though some of them agree very well with Antiochus Epiphanes, yet others can by no means be reconciled to him; but they all agree and correspond exactly with the Romans, and with none else; so that the application of the character to them must be the right application. See Bishop Newton.

Ver. 26. Shut thou up the vision, &c.] This *shutting up of the vision* implies, that it should not be understood for some time. The vision being for *many days*, must necessarily infer a longer term than the calamity under Antiochus, of three years and a half, or even than the whole time from the first beginning of the vision in Cyrus, to the cleansing of the sanctuary under Antiochus, which was not above three hundred and seventy-one years. Such a vision could not well be called *long* by Daniel,

who had seen so much longer before; and especially as the time assigned for it, ver. 14. is *two thousand three hundred days*; which, since they cannot by any account be natural days, must needs be prophetic days, or two thousand and three hundred years. Such a vision may properly enough be said to be *for many days*. See Bishop Newton.

Ver. 27. I Daniel fainted] Daniel's sickness proceeded from his grief for his religion and country; as in the former vision he was grieved at the success of the *little horn* there described. And this is another conclusive argument, that the calamities under Antiochus Epiphanes could not possibly be the main end and ultimate scope of this prophecy; for the calamities under Antiochus were of small extent, and of short duration, in comparison with what the nation had suffered, and was then suffering, under Nebuchadnezzar and his successors. Present and sensible evils usually affect us most; and therefore, that Daniel was so much more affected with the future than the present,—*was astonished*, and *fainted*, and *was sick certain days*, can be ascribed to nothing but his foreseeing that the future distress and misery of the nation would greatly exceed all that they endured at present. But the calamities under Antiochus, as we observed above, were much less and much shorter. Those only which they suffered from the Romans were greater and worse than the evils brought on them by Nebuchadnezzar; and the *transgression of desolation* has now continued above *seventeen hundred years*. They expect, and we expect, that at length the *sanctuary will be cleansed*, and that in God's time his promise in Amos, ix. 11, 12. and Acts, xv. 16, 17. will be fully accomplished. This concern of Daniel, and affection for his religion and country, shew him in a very amiable light, and give an additional lustre to his character. But not only in this instance, but in every other, he manifests the same public spirit, and appears no less eminently a patriot than a prophet. Though he was torn early from his country, and enjoyed all the advantages that he could enjoy in a foreign service, yet nothing could make him forget his native home: and in the next chapter we see him pouring out his soul in prayer, and supplicating most earnestly and devoutly for the pardon and restoration of his captive nation. See Bishop Newton. Houbigant renders the last clause, *But I was silent, and astonished, nobody understanding that I was so affected on account of the vision*.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, This second vision is dated in the third year of Belshazzar's reign. The scene is laid in Shushan, which was one of the royal palaces of the kings of Persia by the river Ulai.

1. The prophet saw a *ram*, the emblem of the second monarchy, having two very high horns, the nations of Medes and Persians; and one horn, which rose the last, *was higher than the other*, the Persians under Cyrus taking the lead, though at first inferior to the Medes. This animal

CHAP. IX.

Daniel, considering the time of the captivity, maketh confession of sins, and prayeth for the restoration of Jerusalem. Gabriel informeth him of the seventy weeks.

[Before Christ 538.]

IN the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which

animal seemed to push furiously, westward, northward, and southward, extending his conquests on every side, none of the nations being able to stand before him; so that he did as he pleased, and became great, rose to universal empire. But such is the perishing nature of all sublunary things, that the seeds of corruption and ruin are ripening when a nation's outward prosperity seems most established; for,

2. *A he-goat attacks and overcomes the ram.* This represents the Grecian monarchy under Alexander: he came from the west, from Macedon, on the face of the whole earth, sweeping it with his victorious arms, and weeping, it is said, that he had not another world to conquer: and he touched not the ground; so rapid were his marches, that he rather seemed to fly than walk; and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes, descriptive of Alexander, the first founder of the monarchy; so eminent a conqueror, so sagacious a general, and attended by his father's wisest counsellors. He came to the ram that had two horns, the Persian monarch Darius Codomannus, then in possession of the kingdom, and ran unto him in the fury of his power, eager to engage, and furious in the attack that he made; highly exasperated by the message of contempt which Darius had sent him, he came close to the ram, joined battle with him, and smote him in three general engagements, at the Granicus, at Issus, and at Arbela; and brake his two horns, overthrew his armies; and so entirely destroyed the force of the Persian empire, that there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground and stamped upon him, quite subdued the whole kingdom of Persia; and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand, his allies all falling with him. Thus the he-goat waxed very great; the Grecian monarchy being established through the greatest part of the then known world.

3. In this flourishing state of the new empire, a sudden stroke divides it into four parts. *The great horn was broken:* Alexander, at thirty-two or three years of age, was cut off suddenly, by a drunken debauch, as some say; or by poison, as others; and for it, in his room, came up four notable ones, his four captains, who divided his dominions among them, see chap. vii. 6. toward the four winds; see the annotations. *Note;* Many take great pains, while others reap the fruit of their labours.

4. The principal thing intended in the vision, as what more immediately concerned the Jewish people, is *the little horn* coming out of these kingdoms. But I have enlarged so much in my annotations on this point, that I shall refer my readers to them.

2dly, The vision that he had seen excited in the prophet a great desire to know the meaning of it; and whilst in his own mind he pondered on what he had seen and heard, God graciously orders one of his angels to explain the particulars to him. *Note;* When, in God's appointed ways,

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was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans;

2 In the first year of his reign, I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

we are earnestly desiring to know his mind and will, he will enlighten our minds, and lead us in the right way. We have,

1. The deep impression made on Daniel by the approach of the heavenly messenger. Overpowered with his glory, he trembled, and fell at his feet as in a swoon, and a deep sleep came upon him. The spirit is sometimes willing, when the flesh is weak.

2. The angel gently raised him from the dust, and set him on his feet, bidding him attend to and understand the explication he was about to give concerning *what shall be in the last end of the indignation; for at the time of the end shall be the vision, or the vision shall have an end at its proper time;* when the troubles of God's people should cease, and his indignation be removed from them, *at the time appointed.* *Note;* All the sufferings of God's faithful people have their bounds and limits, and by faith and patience they shall be enabled with comfort to see their end.

3. He gives the interpretation of the vision, mentioned before, ver. 3—14. But see the annotations.

Lastly, The vision left a deep impression upon him. He fainted on the view of the terrible sufferings that his people were to endure, and he was sick certain days, could not recover from the distress into which the vision had thrown him. *Afterward I rose up,* from his bed, to which he had been confined, and did the king's business, according to the duty of his place; and I was astonished at the vision, at the awful contents of it; but none understood it; he either kept the whole quite a secret, or, if he told the vision, he mentioned not the interpretation, shutting it up as he was commanded. *Note;* (1.) The distress of God's people cannot but deeply affect every gracious soul. (2.) Our grief must never be so inordinate as to disable us from the duties of our station.

CHAP. IX.

THIS chapter contains a most affecting and ardent prayer of Daniel, on a near view of the expiration of the seventy years allotted for Judah's captivity: the success of his prayer is pointed out at the conclusion of it, and the deliverance of his brethren is communicated to the prophet in a very extraordinary revelation by the angel Gabriel; but the misconduct and ingratitude of the Jews would occasion the utter destruction of their restored city, after a period, and by reason of an event, which the prophesy plainly indicates.

Ver. 1. In the first year of Darius] This is the same Darius the Median spoken of before, chap. v. 31. and who succeeded Belsazzar king of the Chaldeans.

Ver. 2. I Daniel understood by books] Daniel had with him in the captivity the holy Scriptures, and in particular the prophecies of Jeremiah, which he here calls so many

3 K

books:

3. ¶ And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes :

4 And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O LORD, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments ;

5 We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments :

6 Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

7 O LORD, righteousness *belongeth* unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day ; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, *that are near, and that are far off*, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee.

8 O LORD, to us *belongeth* confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee.

9 To the LORD our God *belong* mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him ;

10 Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.

11 Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice ; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.

12 And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil : for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem :

13 As *it is* written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us : yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth.

14 Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us : for the LORD our God *is* righteous in all his works which he doeth : for we obeyed not his voice.

15 And now, O LORD our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day ; we have sinned, we have done wickedly.

16 ¶ O LORD, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain : because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people *are become* a reproach to all *that are* about us.

17 Now therefore, O our God, hear the

books : he refers more particularly to the 25th and 29th chapters of that prophet. We may hence observe, that the later prophets studied the writings of the former, for the more perfect understanding of the times when their prophecies were to be fulfilled. Daniel saw a part of Jeremiah's prediction fulfilled, by the vengeance which the Lord had taken upon the house of Nebuchadnezzar ; but he saw no appearance of that deliverance of the people of Israel which the prophet foretold. This was the cause of his uneasiness, and the motive of his prayers.

Ver. 3. And I set my face—to seek by prayer and supplications] *Wherefore, I set, &c. that I might implore him by prayer, &c.* Houbigant.

Ver. 4. O Lord, the great and dreadful God] The emphatic ¶ is used before each of the epithets that follow, “the God, the great, the dreadful.” This prayer, which is occasioned by the greatest and most sincere concern for the captive Jews, is the result also of the deepest humiliation, and expressive of the strongest energies and most earnest

affections. Jeremiah, at chap. xxix. 12. had informed the people, that if they prayed and sought the Lord in their foreign land, they should be heard ; and Daniel performs this duty for himself and his countrymen with the greatest zeal and devotion, especially acknowledging the justice of God and their own unworthiness. See a like prayer, chap. ix. 4. and at Nehem. i. 5.

Ver. 5. We have sinned, and have committed iniquity] Daniel here puts up the confession prescribed in Solomon's consecration-prayer, to be used by the Jews in the land of their captivity.

Ver. 11. By departing, &c.] *By departing, so, as not to obey, &c.*

Ver. 14. Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil] “After having for a long time slept, as it were, upon our faults, he hath at length awakened to punish us.” Or, “While we slept, as it were, in our crimes, the Lord “awaked to chastise us.” Calmet. Houbigant renders it, *The Lord hath not deferred to bring evil upon us.*

prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the LORD's sake.

18 O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.

19 O LORD, hear; O LORD, forgive; O LORD, hearken, and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.

20 ¶ And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God;

21 Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer,

even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.

22 And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding.

23 At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.

24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

Ver. 17. And cause thy face to shine, &c.] And for thine own sake, O Lord, cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary, which is desolate.

Ver. 21. The man Gabriel] Literally, That man, named Gabriel, or rather, "That person or angel, &c. who appeared to me under a human form." See chap. viii. 16. There were three hours of prayer among the Jews; but the most solemn seasons of it were at the morning and evening oblation; at the third and ninth hours of the day. But upon their solemn days of fasting and humiliation, they continued their devotions from the time of the morning sacrifice till that of the evening was finished. Daniel expresses himself in the country of his captivity, in the same manner as the Jews at Jerusalem when the temple subsisted. See Calmet. Instead of, at the beginning, we may read, before.

Ver. 22. And he informed me, &c.] And standing with me, he spoke thus; O Daniel! &c. Houbigant.

Ver. 24. Seventy weeks are determined, &c.] The sum of Calmet's observations on this prophecy is as follows: Daniel is afflicted before the Lord, with a desire to know when the end of those seventy weeks' captivity shall appear, which are foretold by Jeremiah. But God reveals to him a much more sublime and important mystery; namely, the time of the finishing transgressions, and of the coming of the Messiah, of the reign of everlasting righteousness, and of the perfect accomplishment of the prophecies. All this was to be brought about after a space of seventy weeks of years, which make four hundred and ninety. "You are solicitous to know when the seventy years of captivity, foretold by Jeremiah, shall have an end: I am going to announce to you a deliverance infinitely more important, and of which that foretold by Jeremiah is only a figure." The whole verse may be thus paraphrased: "The space of seventy weeks is invariably fixed and determined. This is no conditional or uncertain prediction, whose execution depends upon a future contingency,—the fidelity or in-

*—fidelity of the people. It is not one of those promises, the accomplishment of which may be protracted or invalidated by the malice of men. It is a prophecy, the event of which is certain, and which shall be executed at a fixed period;—in seventy weeks, which are to begin from the time of the edict that enjoins the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, and which will terminate with the death of the Messiah, and the abolition of sacrifices." The Hebrew word סָבַח *callei*, rendered *finish*, may be translated to *restrain*; and the sense will then be, "To put a stop to hypocrisy or sin."—To make an end of sins; either by the atonement to be made for them, or by the exemplary punishment to be inflicted upon the offenders.—To seal up the vision, &c. things which are fulfilled and perfected, are usually sealed up; because they were to receive their accomplishment in Christ. It is thus that the Jews commonly interpret the words, and both Rabbi Levi Ben-Gerson and Abarbanel expressly assert on this passage, that "All the prophecies shall be fulfilled in the Messiah." The sealing up of the prophecy, and the anointing of the Most Holy, were fulfilled in Christ's appearance among the Jews, and in their putting him to death, which was indeed the unction or consecration of the Holy One of God to his priestly office. See Dr. Chandler's Vindication of Daniel, p. 156. and Bishop Chandler's Defence, p. 124. and Vind. p. 297. Houbigant renders the 25th verse, *Know therefore and understand; from the edict which shall be promulged for the return, and for the rebuilding of Jerusalem, shall be seven weeks; then shall the city be built again in solicitude and in troublous times; when, to Messiah the prince, shall be threescore and two weeks.* See his note, where this version is fully justified. By the people of the prince who was to come, are meant the Romans, who are strongly pointed out at the close of the prophecy: see Matt. xxii. 7. xxiv. 15. and Mark, xiii. 14. where our Saviour refers to this prophecy. The former words, but not for himself, (though the passage has been otherwise translated)*

25 Know therefore and understand, *that* from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince, *shall be* seven weeks, and

threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

26 And after threescore and two weeks

translated) refer to our Lord's suffering, through his rich mercy, *solely* for the sins of the world. The era usually fixed upon for the commencement of the *seventy weeks*, is the *twentieth year of Artaxerxes*.

Ver. 25. *Unto the Messiah the Prince, &c.*] That is, until the awful period when the business of his life was finished, until his hour was come, when he was to glorify his Father, or when he was to be cut off by a voluntary suffering for the sins of mankind; and thereby triumph as a prince, over death, and over all his and our enemies. All the circumstances of his life are omitted, or rather comprehended in this final one, when all things that were written of him were accomplished.

What has been hitherto offered, I trust, may be deemed a sufficient explanation of the true and proper sense of the astonishing prophecy contained in the four last verses. Yet, lest the sense here given should be mistaken, or not duly attended to in this detached form, I will beg leave to recapitulate it, or to state the sense of the angelic message with all due deference in the following summary; but previously reminding the reader, that the original word rendered *weeks* throughout the prophecy strictly signifies *sevens*, and may be referred either to days or years.

Seventy weeks of precision, or precise weeks, remain upon thy people and upon thy holy city Jerusalem, to restrain their rebellion or apostacy from God, and to put an end to sins and expiate iniquity, or to bring to a conclusion their sufferings and the punishment which occasioned them, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal the vision of the prophet Jeremiah, and to restore the religious rites and holy things to their proper uses. This first deliverance from the captivity shall be accomplished within seventy weeks of days; but this term shall be typical, or a prelude to another more glorious deliverance, which from its commencement to its full and final period shall be comprehended in the same number of sevens or weeks, yet not of days, but of times or years. And this longer period shall be distributed into three portions, of seven weeks, and then of sixty-two weeks, and lastly of one week, each of which will be distinguished by extraordinary events, as the prophecy now proceeds to shew.

For know and understand,—this interesting business induces me thus solemnly to recal your attention,—that from the passing of an edict to rebuild your city Jerusalem, which had been destroyed by fire, until Messiah the Prince, or from the 20th of Artaxerxes, when this edict will be delivered to Nehemiah, till that important hour, when the Messiah shall be offered up, and thereby triumph as a prince over death and hell and all his enemies, shall be seven weeks and threescore and two weeks, or sixty-nine weeks of years: and the term is thus divided, because the former part shall be distinguished by the building of the city, which shall be fully completed with its streets and walls in that narrower limit of the times.

Then after the threescore and two weeks, or at the

passover next following their termination, shall Messiah be cut off by an ignominious death, and a total desertion. Yet though none shall be for him (so the words may be translated), or he shall be altogether forsaken at that time, his princely authority will still be manifested: for the people of the prince that shall come, or the Roman army in the service of the Messiah, when his business upon earth is completed, and the Gospel fully published, shall destroy both the Jewish city and sanctuary; and they shall come up against it like an inundation, and shall cut down with a general ruin, and to the end of a war decisive of the nation of the Jews there shall be desolations.

Yet the one week of years that remains to complete the number typified in the former deliverance, this space of seven years shall make firm a covenant of security and protection to many, when those who are in Judæa will escape to the mountains; and in the midst of the week the sacrifice and meat-offering, or the whole ritual of the Jewish worship, shall cease: and when upon the borders of the temple, represented by an expanded wing, shall be the abomination of desolation, either the dead bodies of the slain, or the idolatrous ensigns, together with the Roman armies encompassing Jerusalem, then the desolations shall presently follow, and shall continue till a full accomplishment of the decided fate of this devoted people shall be poured upon the desolate, or until the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The date of this prophecy is in the first year of Darius, when the seventy years of the Jewish captivity ended, reckoning from the third of Jehoiakim.

1. Daniel had been diligently searching the Scriptures, and out of the book of Jeremiah understood that the time was at hand for the accomplishment of God's promises in the restoration of his people. *Note;* They who diligently search the Scriptures will find there what will amply compensate their pains.

2. He became an earnest intercessor for the accomplishment of the promised mercy. In fasting and sackcloth he deeply humbled himself, under a sense of the sins which had provoked God's displeasure, and as a mourner over the desolations of Zion; and with faith and importunity *set his face* to the Lord, *to seek by prayer and supplications* the hastening of their deliverance in his good time. *Note;* (1.) What God promises should be the matter of our prayers. (2.) They who have the interests of God's church at heart, cannot but be deeply affected with its desolations, and earnest supplicants that God would *revive his work in the midst of the years*.

2dly, We have Daniel's effectual fervent prayer.

1. He opens with a most reverential address to *the great and dreadful God*; terrible to the sinner, and a consuming fire, yet *full of mercy* towards those who love and serve him, and *faithful* to all his promises.

2. He makes his humble confession of sin, the cause of all

shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

all their sufferings. They had provoked God by every possible aggravation of their iniquities; they had rebelled against him, rejected his government, broken all his precepts, positive and moral; and from the king upon the throne to the meanest of the people, notwithstanding their peculiar obligations, all had joined in the revolt, and were alike deaf to the admonitions of God's prophets, the corrections of his providences, and the threatenings of his word: and this is repeatedly acknowledged, as the burden which lay on the prophet's heart, as it ever will on all true penitents, when they begin in simplicity and godly sincerity to return to God.

3. He justifies God in the punishments inflicted upon them. God was righteous, and they could not in the least except to his dispensations: heavy as his hand was upon them in all the countries of their dispersion, it was less than their iniquities deserved; and with confusion of face they must bow into the dust, and kiss the rod that smote them; all, from the king to the beggar, must join in the acknowledgment of God's justice, and take deepest shame to themselves for their provocations; for they had the fairest notice of the consequences of their iniquities; nor could God, consistent with the honour of his government, overlook such flagrant offences: the curse under which they groaned had been foretold by Moses, and God's faithfulness was glorified in the infliction of it upon them. Their sufferings were singular as their crime, enough it might be thought to have long since bowed the most obdurate heart; but they had continued incorrigibly impenitent, never thought of returning to God; nay, they did not, as a nation in general, so much as direct their prayers to him to sanctify their afflictions, or to remove his terrible indignation from them. No marvel therefore that he still watched over them for evil. *Note;* (1.) In all our sufferings, however severe, we must own that God is righteous, and take to ourselves deserved shame. (2.) If sinners continue incorrigible, God's wrath will abide upon them. (3.) In our anguish our first recourse should be to God in prayer.

4. Though the iniquities of the people were so incontrovertibly evident and aggravated, the prophet still had recourse to the divine mercy; it was God's distinguished glory, that to him belonged mercies and forgivenesses, his patience infinite, his compassions boundless: and this is the only hope of the miserable sinner; for else he must forever despair. Wondrous had been the instances of the divine interposition in time past: the fame of his delivering his people from Egypt, was to that day heard to his glory: what he had done before, therefore, the prophet hopes he will do again; and by delivering them now from Babylon, exalt yet more abundantly his own great name, and once more magnify his power and grace towards them, Jer. xvi. 14, &c. As if to excite the divine commiseration, he spreads their present wretchedness before him; they were become the contempt of the heathen, and a reproach to the neighbouring nations; their holy city of Jerusalem

laid in ruins; and that once glorious sanctuary, their boast and honour, was now desolate and profaned. *Note;* (1.) They who have made themselves wicked, may expect that God will make them vile. (2.) Nothing afflicts the gracious heart so much as the desolations of the sanctuary, and the triumphs of the wicked over it.

5. He concludes with importunate supplications, urged with the greatest vehemence and most engaging pleas. He founds all his hopes upon the relation that God yet stood in towards all the penitent among them, *O our God;* and therefore is emboldened to ask, [1.] The forgiveness of their sins, the cause of their calamities: and this is the sinner's first concern, the pardon of his guilt being more desirable than the removal of all his afflictions. [2.] He begs that he would turn away his wrath from Jerusalem, under the dire tokens of which the city at present lay, and *cause his face to shine upon the desolate sanctuary;* restoring it from its ruins, setting up again his worship there, and favouring them once more with a sense of his gracious presence in the midst of them. [3.] He entreats that the Lord would not defer their deliverance and recovery. They seemed at the last gasp, and the time of the promise was now come; so that he could with faith plead for a present and immediate answer of peace; and he urges these his requests,

(1.) With an absolute renunciation of any trust and dependence on themselves, as deserving the least notice or regard; and this every humbled sinner who approaches God unfeignedly does.

(2.) With an entire dependence on God, drawing their pleas for mercy from the consideration of his own glory. It must be *for his own sake*, not theirs, to magnify the riches of his grace; *for the Lord's sake*, the Lord Jesus, the sinner's atonement and glorious advocate, in and through whom alone any covenant mercies can be bestowed. *His righteousness* would be herein displayed, when he should execute vengeance on their cruel enemies, and prove his faithfulness to his promises; and *his mercy* would in the most eminent manner be evinced, when thus exercised toward objects so utterly unworthy, and withal so exceedingly miserable. And finally, the sanctuary was his own, and the city and people called by his name: he had an interest therefore in their recovery and restoration; and they had, by virtue of their relation to him, a peculiar claim upon him, to help them, even for his own glory; the most effectual plea that we can make in any of our prayers.

3dly, Very memorable is the answer here given to the prophet's prayer, and it contains one of the most remarkable prophecies of the Messiah that is to be found in the book of God. We have,

1. The time when this answer was given him, while he was speaking and praying; confessing his own sins and those of his people, and making supplication before God for pardon, and the restoration of God's sanctuary. The hour that he had chosen for these devotions was that of the evening oblation, when the lamb was offered; which prefigured him who should appear in the end of the world to take

27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of

abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

take away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and for whose sake this revelation was now made to the prophet. *Note;* (1.) God is pleased sometimes to return immediate and sensible answers to the prayers of his believing people. (2.) Daniel, though so distinguished a saint, does not approach God but with the humiliation of a sinner; the best of men in their approaches to God must have no plea but their own infinite unworthiness and the infinite merit of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. The messenger is an angel, *Gabriel the mighty One of God*, appearing in a human form, whom the same Daniel had seen before, chap. viii. 16. He came with haste to deliver the message on which he was sent from on high; and touched him, to engage his attention, and to give him an intimation to desist from prayer, and hearken to what he was about to deliver; talking familiarly with him, as a man with his friend. He informs Daniel, that the moment he began to pray to God, *the commandment came forth*; either from the Lord, dispatching him on his errand; or at that very time the proclamation for the release of the Jews was signed by Cyrus. He lets him know how highly he was regarded of God; *Thou art greatly beloved, or art desired*; exceedingly amiable in the eyes of God and all his saints: and as the Lord intended to reveal to him his secrets, he must attend to, and consider the following *vision*. *Note;* (1.) Angels, though great in power and might, are but the servants of God's pleasure; and they are also ministers to the heirs of salvation. (2.) God's saints are greatly beloved by him, and he makes them know it by the visits of his grace; not to raise in them a conceit of themselves, but to humble them under a sense of their own unworthiness, and to engage a large return of love and gratitude. (3.) They who would understand the things of God, must consider them attentively and seriously.

3. The message which he brought: *seventy weeks of years, containing 490 years, are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city*; so long God makes known to his prophet that their polity should last, or the most remarkable events concerning them should fall within that space of time; *to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy*. These are the grand matters which shall be transacted within that period by the Messiah, the hope of Israel: he came *to finish transgression*, by taking upon himself the sin of the world, and thereby completely satisfying the justice of God in behalf of every faithful soul; that so he might be reconciled to them consistently with all his attributes—that he might be just, and yet a justifier of them that believe in Jesus: *and to bring in everlasting righteousness, or the righteousness of ages*; that righteous obedience of Christ to the death of the Cross, which constitutes him our everlasting High-Priest, and by virtue of which alone our persons and our works are accepted of God; and also that internal righteousness—that image of

God, which alone can qualify us for the eternal enjoyment of him the sovereign good: *and to seal up the vision and prophecy*, which should receive their full accomplishment in Christ Jesus; *and to anoint the most Holy, the Messiah*; most holy both in his divine and human nature; and appointed to, and qualified for the office of Mediator by that oil of gladness, the gift of the Spirit, which the Father without measure imparted to him: though this may also be applied to the people of God, who have an unction from the Holy One, and are sanctified by his Spirit, which in the days of the Messiah should be poured out in the most abundant manner. *Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks*: this is the period fixed, whence the seventy weeks are to be dated; which commenced, as is generally supposed, when Nehemiah received the edict of Artaxerxes, in the twentieth year of his reign, Nehem. ii. 1—8. wherein express mention is made of rebuilding Jerusalem; and this will make the expiration of the sixty-nine weeks, or 483 years, fall just at the year thirty-three, being generally supposed the year of Christ's death. The dividing of the weeks into different periods of seven, threescore and two, and one, seems to have respect to the different events, peculiar to these several spaces of times. The first seven weeks, or forty-nine years, include the troublous times when the city was rebuilding; during which Sanballat, Tobiah, and Gessem so opposed the work. And the like opposition may they expect who zealously stand up in every age to build the walls of Christ's church; but against them, if faithful, no enemy shall finally prevail. *And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off*; at the expiration of 483 years; but not for himself, but for the sins of the world, and especially of them that believe, which were laid upon him: *and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary*, as the Roman emperor did with his armies; *and the end thereof shall be with a flood*, so irresistibly should they sweep the land; *and unto the end of the war desolations are determined*; from the beginning of the war to the end, God had in righteous judgment given the Jewish people up to be consumed. *And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week*: which, as some suppose, refers to Messiah the Prince, confirming the covenant of grace, and by his own oblation of himself putting a period to the ceremonial services; but rather respects the prince of the Romans, who should come, having for that purpose made peace with other nations, as he did, in order to be more disengaged to wreak his vengeance on the Jews: *and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease*; through the strictness of the siege, the famine which prevailed, and the tumults which were in the city, before it was taken they had ceased to offer the daily sacrifice; *for the overspreading of abominations, for the wickedness of the Jewish people, who had filled up the measure*

CHAP. X.

Daniel, having humbled himself, seeth a vision: being troubled with fear, he is comforted by the angel.

[Before Christ 534.]

IN the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision.

2 In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks.

3 I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.

4 And in the four-and-twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel;

5 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz:

6 His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.

7 And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves.

measure of their iniquities, he shall make it desolate; God giving the land into the hand of the Romans: some read the words, upon the wing, or battlement, shall be the idols of the desolator; the Roman ensigns, with their idols thereon portrayed, should be fixed on the walls, or in the sanctuary; even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate; either these armies with their abominations should besiege the city, till the determined consumption should be made, and the land utterly desolate; or these desolations should remain till the time prefixed, when the fulness of the Gentiles should come in, Luke, xxi. 24. Some render the words, upon the desolator; meaning the Romans, who should themselves be at last cut off, and then the desolations of Zion should cease.

This last week, according to the interpretation given, is separated from the rest; and the events contained in it, through the forbearance of God, deferred for a time, till about thirty years after the expiration of the sixty-nine weeks. On the whole, we have here an irrefragable argument against the Jews, who reject the true Messiah; it being evident, according to these prophecies, that he must have appeared many hundred years ago; and all the things predicted of him exactly corresponding with our adored Lord's appearing in the flesh, we are assured that this is he that should come, nor look for another.

CHAP. X.

THIS chapter contains the preparatory circumstances to the final revelation which was made to Daniel in the two last chapters of the book. The vision was to be of great extent, and is therefore ushered in with a preface of considerable length; in which are pointed out the humiliation of the prophet, the attention that was paid to it, the appearance of the divine messenger, the impression it made on Daniel's mind, the design of the vision, and the strength from heaven with which he was favoured, in order to enable him to comprehend it; with other circumstances relating to the angels that make the discovery.

Ver. 1. In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia That is,

after the death of Darius, or the seventy-second year from the commencement of the captivity, the two hundred and fourteenth of the æra of Nabonassar, and the fifth of his reign, according to the canon: then, as follows in one manuscript, דְּבַר יְהוָה *debar Jehovah*, "the word of JEHOVAH" "was revealed." By this time the prophet must have been at least ninety years of age, and persons have often been favoured with stronger and farther illuminations a little before their deaths, as was the case of Isaac and Jacob, in the book of Genesis. The kingdom of Elam, from the son of Shem of that name, was considerable among the nations in the time of Abraham, under Chedorlaomer, Gen. xiv. 4, 5. and seems to have continued increasing and flourishing afterwards till it was subdued by the united powers of Media and Babylon. By an union with the Medes it recovered this defeat, so as to become the seat of extensive or universal empire under the name of Peres or Persia, in the first year of Cyrus.

Ver. 2. I Daniel was mourning three full weeks Various causes are assigned for this mourning of the prophet. Usher thinks that it was on account of the interruption given by the Samaritans to the rebuilding of the temple. But I am persuaded, says Calmet, that it arose principally from the obscurity which the prophet found in the prophecies revealed to him; which indeed may be collected from the angel's touching upon no other cause of mourning. In consequence of Daniel's fasting, &c. he appears, and explains to him, in a clearer manner, what had been more obscurely revealed in the preceding visions.

Ver. 5. Fine gold of Uphaz If we compare this place with Jer. x. 9. and the reading of some of the versions, we shall probably be inclined to agree with Bochart and Calmet, that Ophir and Uphaz are the same. Origen on Job, xxii. 24. observes, that some interpreters will have Soplir or Ophir to be Africa; and the ancient navigators touched upon it when they sailed from the Red Sea round the Cape of Good Hope, and returned by the Mediterranean. Mr. Bruce thinks Ophir to have been in Abyssinia, where the mines of Sofala now are, and that some part near this coast was called by Eupolemus in Eusebius *Ophri*, and also that

8 Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.

9 Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground.

10 ¶ And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands.

11 And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling.

12 Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.

13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.

14 Now I am come to make thee under-

stand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.

15 And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb.

16 And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength.

17 For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me.

18 Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me,

19 And said, O man, greatly beloved, fear not; peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me.

20 Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come.

that Tarshish was on the same coast, nearer the Arabian Gulph, vol. i. c. 4. And in the Abyssinian Annals in vol. ii. he finds the name of Tarshish mentioned as one of the petty kingdoms in the neighbourhood of Adel, and which lay directly in the road from the Red Sea to Sofala or Ophir. See Bishop Lowth on Isaiah, chap. ii. 13—16.

Ver. 8. *For my comeliness was turned, &c.] The flower of my strength withered, and all my powers failed me.* Houbigant. The reader will observe, that this description given of the angel is very similar to that given by St. John, Rev. i. 13, &c. of the great High-Priest of the church: and one would be ready thence to conclude, that the same person was intended to be described in both places.

Ver. 9. *Then was I in a deep sleep.] Then I lay lifeless with my face prone upon the ground.* Houbigant.

Ver. 13. *But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me.] "Stood before me."* Purver. This is thought by some to be either Cyrus or Cambyses, making opposition to the building of the temple, and becoming hostile to the people of God: but as this is not at all probable so soon after passing the decree in their favour, so neither could it be properly deemed resisting an angel. Others have thought that there is an allusion in this verse, and at ver. 20. to the guardian or tutelary angels of different countries; which

doctrine seems countenanced by several passages in Scripture, and especially by Zech. vi. 5. Grotius is of this opinion. Mr. Lowth has treated this matter very fully, and to his note I would refer the reader; he adds also, that others suppose the contest may be between a good and an evil angel, as in Zech. iii. 1. and St. Jude, ver. 9. Which latter opinion is perhaps the most just, as there should seem to be no dispute or contest between the ministering spirits of heaven, who are always obedient to the pleasure of their Lord. And when the Almighty sent a superior angel, Michael, his office probably was to assist Gabriel in subduing the prince of the power of the air, the powers of this darksome world, or the spirits that rule over the children of disobedience. The opposition was made twenty-one days; and as this was exactly the number of days that Daniel fasted, the contest may possibly have some allusion to this struggle.

Ver. 16. *One like the similitude, &c.]* Most of the versions read, *He being in appearance like a man;* see ver. 18. The angel Gabriel, most probably, is meant, who appeared to the prophet in a human form. Compare chap. viii. 15. ix. 21.

Ver. 18. *Then there came, &c.] Then he being in appearance like a man, came again, and touched me, &c.*

Ver. 20. *To fight, &c.] To withstand the prince of Persia.* Ver.

21 But I will shew thee that which is none that holdeth with me in these things, noted in the scripture of truth: and *there is* but Michael your prince.

Ver. 21. Michael your prince] This shews in what sense the word *prince* is to be understood in the preceding parts of this chapter, and to what order of beings it is to be applied. Michael and Gabriel were probably the tutelary angels of the Jews. These names do not occur in any books of the Old Testament that were written before the captivity. Castell mentions the names of four that were said to stand around the throne of God, Michael, Uriel, Gabriel, and Raphael; two only of which seem to be named in Scripture. But whatever may be determined concerning their names, it is certain, from various passages of the Old Testament, that ministering spirits continually attend upon the service of God, and execute the divine commands. In the two last verses these blessed spirits appear to have been intended. We know, and can know, no more of the offices or employments of these celestial agents than what is revealed to us, and therefore it is in vain to indulge conjecture. In general we may conclude, that they will be favourable or unfavourable to any nation or people according to the state of religion, holiness, and virtue among them; and that all things and all powers will work together for good to those who fear and love God.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, In the third year of Cyrus, this last of Daniel's prophecies bears date. He was now a very aged man, and high in the favour of God, who revealed to him another scene of events, which would certainly come to pass in their appointed season: and this vision was not couched under any emblematical figures, as the former, but delivered in direct words; so that he had a clear understanding of the facts related, and of the things which should come to pass.

We have an account,

1. Of the situation in which the prophet was, when this vision appeared to him: he had been *mourning three full weeks, and ate no pleasant bread*; what he used was coarse as well as scanty; he neither tasted *flesh* nor *wine*, nor *anointed himself* during the whole time, but spent it in deep humiliation of soul and body before the Lord. The cause, some suggest, was the wickedness of the Jews which he had foreseen, in cutting off the Messiah, and the desolations which would follow: or, as others, the backwardness of many in Babylon to return to Jerusalem; or the obstruction and difficulties that they met with who were returned to Judæa. But whatever was the cause, it shewed the mortified spirit of this holy saint of God, and the concern that he bore toward his people.

2. A glorious personage appears to him: he was by the river Hiddekel, with others probably assembled for the purposes of devotion, when, lifting up his eyes, he saw *a certain man*, &c. This glorious person was visible to him, but not to those who were with him; yet they heard and saw enough to fill them with deep consternation, *so that they fled to hide themselves*; while Daniel remained alone with this celestial personage, and overwhelmed fell into a swoon at his feet, pale as death, and his strength utterly gone: yet, though prostrate on the ground, and his

bodily senses locked up in sleep, he heard *the voice of his words*.

2dly, From this debilitated state of body, the prophet is by degrees restored, and raised up to hear the words of the vision.

1. *An hand touched me*, and raised him upon his *hands and knees*, then bid him stand upright, which he did, though still *trembling*. Thus the Lord himself raises up dejected souls from the depths of despair; a beam of hope and comfort first breaks in: improving the little strength that God bestows, they begin to stand up; yet, notwithstanding this, their fears and doubts frequently for a while keep them trembling.

2. The angel kindly encourages him: he assures him of God's great regard to him, and bids him not fear, but receive with attention what he was about to declare to him; for God had heard his supplications from the moment he began to speak, had respect unto his humiliations, and had sent on purpose to acquaint him of what should befall his people *in the latter days*; for the prophecy extends to the most distant events, even to the reign of Antichrist, the resurrection of the dead, and the end of time; for *the vision is for many days*. The angel farther informs him, that he was detained in the court of Persia one and twenty days, the time of Daniel's mourning, to counteract the devices of the prince of the kingdom of Persia, either Cambyses, or rather an evil angel, who had been endeavouring at the court of Persia to do some mischief to the people of God; but the enemy was disappointed; for Michael, a chief archangel, came to Gabriel's help, and aided him to disappoint the designs that were forming; for which end he had abode so long with the king and nobles of Persia. *Note*; (1.) A sense of God's love to our souls, is the grand barrier against terrifying fear. (2.) The moment God's people begin to speak, his ear is attentive to their prayers, and he is ready to grant their petitions. (3.) Whatever plots devils or men form against Christ's people, he is able to baffle their attempts, and save his faithful ones from the power of evil. (4.) Though we need not pry curiously into the nature and employment of angels, much less pay them adoration, we may be thankful to their great Master who employs them, for unnumbered kind offices that we owe them, when ourselves were not apprehensive of the least danger.

3. The prophet, though raised upon his feet, with downcast eyes, dumb with amazement and awe, stood statue-like and motionless at these words, till the same kind hand which probably raised him before, touched his lips, and gave him liberty of speech: when, with great respect addressing the heavenly messenger, the prophet owns his terrors, and acknowledges their cause. The vision had overpowered him, conscious of his own defilement and impurity; for saith he, *How can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord*.

4. To remove all his fears, the third time the angelic messenger drew near, and by a touch communicated strength unto him, that he might be capable of conversing with him, and attending to the message that he was sent to bring him.

C H A P. XI.

The overthrow of Persia by the king of Grecia. Leagues and conflicts between the kings of the south and of the north. The invasion and tyranny of the Romans.

[Before Christ 534.]

ALSO I, in the first year of Darius the Mede, *even* I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him.

To remove all his fears, the angel repeats the assurances of God's love; encourages him to resume his wonted peace; wishes him all prosperity in body and soul; bids him be strong in the Lord and the power of his might, and cast away every distressing apprehension, since God so highly regarded him. Power accompanied his word; and Daniel, now sensible of an increase of strength, and acknowledging the favour, is ready, with deepest respect, to hear whatever his honoured visitant should say. *Note;* (1.) God speaks peace to the troubled consciences of his praying and believing people, and by his Spirit seals the word in their hearts. (2.) Though of ourselves weak as infancy, we can do all things through Christ strengthening us.

5. He gives him in general a hint of what he more fully explains afterwards. *Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee?* it was, as he had told him, in answer to his prayers, and to inform him concerning his people; and *now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia; to continue to baffle his malice against the people of God: and when I am gone forth, having finished his work successfully, so! the prince of Grecia shall come.* See the Annotations. *But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth,* concerning these future events: *and there is none that boldeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.* The glorious God, by whose upholding strength the ministry of his servants becomes effectual, will be the everlasting protector and defender of his faithful saints from all the malice and enmity of earth or hell.

C H A P. XI.

THIS and the following chapter contain the substance of Daniel's last vision, or a series of prophetic history from the third year of Cyrus to the end of time. The dominion is soon made to pass from the Persians to the Grecians: the state of the Greek empire is continued through various changes and revolutions, and particularly with respect to Syria and Egypt, till at length it yields to the Romans. Several particulars afterwards follow which must relate to the church of Christ; and the last chapter has a peculiar respect to the time of the end of all prophecy, or to the grand consummation of all things.

Ver. 1. Also I, in the first year] It is the usual method of the Holy Spirit, to make the later prophecies explanatory of the former; and revelation is *as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.* The four great empires shewn to Nebuchadnezzar under the symbol of a great image, were again more particularly represented to Daniel under the forms of four great wild beasts. In like

2 And now will I shew thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia.

3 And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will.

manner, the memorable events which were revealed to Daniel in the vision of the ram and he-goat, are here more clearly revealed in this last vision by the angel: so that this latter prophecy may not improperly be said to be a comment upon the former. It comprehends many signal events; but the types, symbols, and figures of the things, are not exhibited in this, as in most other visions, and then expounded by the angel; but the angel relates the whole; and not by way of vision, but only by a narration informs Daniel of that *which is noted in the Scripture of truth*, chap. x. 21. as if future events were noted in a book by God; and the prophecy therefore, being taken from *the Scripture of truth*, deserves our strictest attention. See Bishop Newton, vol. ii. p. 63. 65.

Ver. 2. There shall stand up yet three kings] They were to stand up yet; that is to say, after Cyrus, the founder of the empire, who was then reigning. These *three kings*, were Cambyses, the son of Cyrus; Smerdis the Magian, who pretended to be another son of Cyrus, but was really an impostor; and Darius, the son of Hystaspes, who married the daughter of Cyrus. *The fourth, who shall be far richer than they all*, was Xerxes, the son of Darius, of whom Justin remarks, that "He had so great an abundance of riches in his kingdoms, that though rivers were dried up by his numerous armies, yet his wealth remained unexhausted." Herodotus informs us, that Pythius the Lydian entertained Xerxes and all his army, and offered him two thousand talents of silver, and three millions nine hundred and ninety-three thousand pieces of gold, with the stamp of Darius, towards defraying the charges of the war; but the king, so far from wanting supplies, rewarded Pythius for his liberality, and presented him with seven thousand *darics*, to make his number a complete round sum of four millions. Each of these *darics* was worth more than a guinea of our money. See Newton.

And by his strength, &c.] Herodotus, who lived in that age, assures us, that Xerxes' army, which was collected from various parts of the continent, amounted to five millions two hundred and eighty-three thousand two hundred and twenty men: and, not content with stirring up the east, he engaged the Carthaginians in his alliance, who raised an army of Africans and mercenaries from Spain, Gaul, and Italy, which consisted of three hundred thousand men, besides a fleet of two hundred ships. Xerxes was the principal author of the long wars between the Greeks and Persians; and, being the last king of Persia who invaded Greece, is mentioned last. The Grecians in their turn invaded Asia; and, Xerxes' expedition

4 And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those.

5 ¶ And the king of the south shall be strong, and one of his princes; and he shall be

strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion.

6 And in the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement: but she shall not retain the power of the arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm: but she shall be given.

expedition being the most memorable on one side, as Alexander's was on the other, the reigns of these two kings are not improperly connected together, though no less than nine kings intervened betwixt them. See Newton. Houbigant renders this clause, *And, relying on his riches, he shall stir up all things against the kingdoms of Greece.*

Ver. 3. *A mighty king shall stand up, &c.]* Afterwards, &c. Houbigant. This is the character of Alexander. That he was a mighty king and conqueror, that he not only ruled with great dominion over Greece and the whole Persian empire, but likewise added India to his conquests; and that he did according to his will,—none daring to contradict or oppose him, or if they did, like Clytus and Callisthenes, paying for it with their lives—are facts too well known to require any particular proof. See Newton.

Ver. 4. *When he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken] When he shall have stood up.* These particulars have been illustrated before, chap. viii. 8—22. Alexander died at Babylon, at the age of thirty-two years and eight months only, of which he reigned twelve years and eight months. In so short a time did this sun of glory rise and set! And in the space of about fifteen years after this, his family and posterity became extinct. His wife Statira was murdered soon after his death by his other wife Roxana. His brother Aridæus, who succeeded him, was killed, together with his wife Eurydice, by the command of Olympias, the mother of Alexander, after he had been king six years and some months; and not long after, Olympias herself was slain by the soldiers in revenge. Alexander Ægus, a son by Roxana, in the fourteenth year of his age was privately murdered, together with his mother, by order of Cassander; and, two years after, Hercules, the other son of Alexander, by Barsine, was also, with his mother, privately murdered by Polyperchon. Such was the miserable end of Alexander's family! After which the governors assumed each in his province the title of king. Thus was Alexander's kingdom broken, and divided, not to his posterity; but was plucked up even for others; and divided towards the four winds of heaven; for four of his captains prevailed over the rest, as was before observed on chap. viii. 8. But though the kingdom of Alexander was divided into four principal parts, yet only two of them, Egypt and Syria, have a place in this prophecy. These two were by far the greatest and most considerable; and these two at one time were in a manner the only remaining kingdoms of the four. These two likewise continued distinct kingdoms after the others were swallowed up by the Romans. But there is a more proper and peculiar reason for enlarging upon these two particularly; because Judæa, lying betwixt them, was sometimes in the pos-

session of the kings of Egypt, and sometimes of the kings of Syria: and it is in respect of their situation to Judæa, that the kings of Egypt and Syria are called *kings of the south* and the *north*. See Newton. Houbigant renders the latter part of this verse thus, *But not to his posterity; nor shall it be of so great power as was his: for his kingdom shall be disjointed even among others, and these four.*

Ver. 5. *The king of the south, &c.]* The LXX render the words, *And the king of the south shall be strong, and one of his princes shall be strong above him; or perhaps it may be better rendered thus, And the king of the south shall be strong, and one of his princes; and the king of the north shall be strong above him, and have dominion: His dominion shall be a great dominion.* [Houbigant reads, *Afterwards the king of the south shall be powerful; but yet one of his princes shall be more powerful than he, and shall have a dominion far greater than his dominion.*] The king of the south was indeed very strong; for Ptolemy had annexed Cyprus, Phœnicia, Caria, and many islands, cities, and regions, to Egypt. He had likewise enlarged the bounds of his empire by the acquisition of Cyrene; and was now become so great, as not so much to fear his enemies, as to be feared by them. But still the king of the north, or Seleucus Nicator, was strong above him; for, having annexed the kingdom of Macedon and Thrace to the crown of Syria, he was become master of three parts in four of Alexander's dominions. After Alexander, he possessed the largest part of Asia; for all was subject to him, from Phrygia up to the river Indus, and beyond it. Seleucus Nicator, having reigned seven months after the death of Lysimachus, was basely murdered; to him succeeded in the throne of Syria, his son Antiochus Soter, and to Antiochus Soter, his son Antiochus Theus: at the same time Ptolemy Philadelphus reigned in Egypt. There were frequent wars between the kings of Egypt and Syria; particularly between Ptolemy Philadelphus, the second king of Egypt, and Antiochus Theus, the third king of Syria. See Bishop Newton.

Ver. 6. *And in the end of years]* After these wars had long lasted between Ptolemy and Antiochus Theus, they agreed to make peace; upon condition, that the latter should put away his former wife Laodice and her sons, and marry Berenice, Ptolemy's daughter; accordingly, he brought her to Antiochus, with an immense treasure, and thence received the appellation of *dowry-giver*. She did not, however, long retain her interest and power with Antiochus; for, after some time, in a fit of love he brought back his former wife with her children to court again. But neither did, he stand, nor his arm, nor his seed; for Laodice, fearing the fickle temper of her husband, lest he should recal Berenice, caused him to be poisoned; and

up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in *these* times.

7 But out of a branch of her roots shall *one* stand up in his estate, which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortrefs of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail :

8 And shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods, with their princes, *and* with their precious vessels of silver and of gold ; and he shall continue *more* years than the king of the north.

9 So the king of the south shall come into *his* kingdom, and shall return into his own land.

10 But his sons shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces : and *one* shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through : then shall he return, and be stirred up *even* to his fortrefs.

11 And the king of the south shall be moved with choler, and shall come forth and fight with him, *even* with the king of the north : and he shall set forth a great multitude ; but the multitude shall be given into his hand.

12 *And* when he hath taken away the multitude, his heart shall be lifted up ; and he shall cast down *many* ten thousands : but he shall not be strengthened by *it*.

managed matters so as to fix her eldest son Callinicus on the throne : and, not content with this, she caused *Berenice* also to be murdered, *and them that brought her* ; for her Egyptian women and attendants, endeavouring to defend her, were many of them slain with her : *and he that begat her* ; or rather, *he whom she brought forth* ; the son being murdered as well as the mother, by the order of Laodice : *and he that strengthened her*, &c. her husband Antiochus, or those who took her part, or rather her father, who died a little before, and who was excessively fond of her. See Bishop Newton.

Ver. 7—9. But out of a branch, &c.] Rather, as in the Vulgate, *Out of the branch of her root, shall stand up a plant ; and he shall come, &c.* This branch which sprung out of the same root with Berenice was Ptolemy Euergetes, her brother, who no sooner succeeded his father, than he came with a great army, and entered into the provinces of the king of the north ; that is, of Seleucus Callinicus, who, with his mother Laodice, reigned in Syria ; and he acted against them, and prevailed so far as to take Syria, Cilicia, the upper parts beyond the Euphrates, and almost all Asia. And when he had heard that a sedition was raised in Egypt, he plundered the kingdom of Seleucus, and took forty thousand talents of silver and precious vessels, and images of the gods two thousand and five hundred ; and, had he not been recalled by a domestic sedition, would have subdued the whole kingdom of Syria. Thus the king of the south came into the kingdom of the north, and then returned, &c. He likewise continued more years than the king of the north ; for Seleucus died in exile, by a fall from his horse, and Ptolemy survived him about four or five years. See Newton.

Ver. 10. But his sons shall be stirred up, &c.] The sons of Seleucus Callinicus were Seleucus and Antiochus ; the elder of whom, Seleucus, succeeded him ; and, to distinguish him from others of the same name, was denominated Ceraunus, or the thunderer. Seleucus Ceraunus was indeed stirred up, and assembled a multitude of forces, to recover his father's dominions ; but, being destitute of money, and unable to keep his army in obedience, was poisoned by two of his generals after an inglorious reign

of two or three years. Upon his decease his brother Antiochus Magnus was proclaimed king. The prophet's expression is very remarkable, that his sons should be stirred up, and assemble a great multitude of forces ; but then the number is changed, and only ONE should certainly come and overflow, &c. Accordingly, Antiochus came with a great army, retook Seleucia, and by the means of Theodotus recovered Syria. Then, after a truce, wherein both sides treated of peace, but prepared for war, Antiochus returned, and overcame Nicolaus the Egyptian general, and had thoughts of invading Egypt itself. See Newton.

Ver. 11. And the king of the south shall be moved, &c.] The king of the south, at that time, was Ptolemy Philopater, who succeeded his father Euergetes : he was, no doubt, moved with choler for the losses that he had sustained, and for the revolt of Theodotus and others. And he came forth ; he marched out of Egypt with a numerous army, and encamped not far from Raphia, the nearest town of Egypt after Rhinocorura. And there he fought with the king of the north ; for thither likewise came Antiochus with his army, and a memorable battle was fought there by the two kings. And he, the king of the north, set forth a great multitude ; amounting to sixty-two thousand foot, six thousand horse, and one hundred and two elephants. But yet the multitude was given into his hand ; that is to say, into the hand of the king of the south ; for Ptolemy obtained a complete victory. Upon this defeat, Raphia and the neighbouring towns contended which should be the most forward to submit to the conqueror ; and Antiochus was forced to retreat with his scattered army to Antioch, and thence sent ambassadors to solicit a peace. See Newton.

Ver. 12. When he hath taken away, &c.] Had Ptolemy pursued his blow, he might probably have deprived Antiochus of his kingdom : but his heart was lifted up with success : being delivered from his fears, he more freely indulged his licentious desires ; and, after a few menaces and complaints, granted peace to Antiochus, that he might be no more interrupted in the gratification of his passions. What availed it to have conquered enemies from without, while thus overcome by vices from within ? Indeed,

13 For the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army and with much riches.

14 And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south: also the robbers of thy people shall exalt them-

selves to establish the vision; but they shall fall.

15 So the king of the north shall come, and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities: and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, neither shall there be any strength to withstand.

16 But he that cometh against him shall

he was so far from being *strengthened* by his success, that his subjects, offended at his inglorious peace, and more inglorious life, rebelled against him. But the prophet, in this passage, alludes more particularly to the case of his own countrymen. After the retreat of Antiochus, Ptolemy visited the cities of Cælo-Syria and Palestine; and in his progress came to Jerusalem, where he offered sacrifices, and attempted in the insolence of pride to enter into the holy of holies. His curiosity was with difficulty restrained, and he departed in heavy displeasure against the whole nation of the Jews. At his return, therefore, to Alexandria, he began a cruel persecution upon the Jewish inhabitants there, and cast down many ten thousands; for it appears, that sixty thousand, or forty thousand at least, were slain about this time. No king could be strengthened by the loss of such a number of useful subjects; but if we add to this loss the rebellion of the Egyptians, we shall evidently own, that his kingdom must have been much weakened, and in a very tottering condition. See Bishop Newton.

Ver. 13. The king of the north shall return, &c.] The following events were not to take place till after certain years; and the peace continued between the two crowns about fourteen years. In that interval Ptolemy Philopater died, and was succeeded by his son Ptolemy Epiphanes, a child of four or five years old. Antiochus too, having taken and slain the rebel Achæus, and reduced the eastern parts, was at leisure to prosecute any enterprize. He had acquired great riches, and collected many forces in this eastern expedition; so that he was enabled to set forth a greater multitude than the former; and he doubted not to have an easy victory over an infant king. See Newton.

Ver. 14. There shall many stand up] Agathocles was in possession of the young king's person; but so dissolute and proud in the exercise of his power, that the provinces which before were subject to Egypt rebelled; Egypt itself was disturbed by seditions; and the people of Alexandria rose against Agathocles, and caused him, his sister, mother, and their associates, to be put to death; while Philip king of Macedonia and Antiochus entered into a league, and divided Ptolemy's dominions between them as they thought proper. The phrase *robbers of the people*, is literally, *the sons of the breakers*, the sons of the revolters, the factious, profligate, and refractory ones of the people; for the Jews at that time were broken into factions, part adhering to the king of Egypt, and part to the king of Syria; but the majority were for their breaking away their allegiance to Ptolemy. In the Vulgate it is rendered, *the sons also of the prevaricators of thy people*; in the Greek, *the sons of the pestilent ones of the people*. What shall they do?—They shall

exalt themselves to establish the vision; shall revolt from Ptolemy, and thereby shall contribute greatly, without their knowing it, towards the accomplishment of this prophecy concerning the calamities which should be brought upon the Jewish nation by the succeeding kings of Syria. *But they shall fall*; for Scopas came with a powerful army from Ptolemy, and, Antiochus being engaged in other parts, soon reduced the cities of Cælo-Syria and Palestine, subdued the Jews in the winter season, placed a garrison in the coasts of Jerusalem, and returned with great spoils to Alexandria. See Newton.

Ver. 15, 16. So the king of the north shall come, &c. and take the most fenced cities] Antiochus, being desirous to recover Judæa, and the cities which Scopas had taken, came again into those parts. Scopas was sent to oppose him; but was defeated near the sources of Jordan, lost a great part of his army, and was pursued to Sidon, where he was shut up with ten thousand men, and closely besieged. Three famous generals were sent from Egypt to raise the siege; but were defeated of their purpose, and Scopas was forced by famine to surrender, upon the hard conditions of having life only granted to him and his men; after which they were obliged to lay down their arms, and were sent away stripped and naked. This event is supposed to be principally intended by his *casting up a mount, and taking the city of munitions*; for Sidon was an exceeding strong city in its situation and fortifications. But if we take the phrase more generally, Antiochus, after the success of this battle and siege, reduced other countries, and took other fenced cities. *The arms of the south could not withstand him, neither his chosen people*; neither Scopas, nor the other great generals, nor the choicest troops who were sent against him: but he did according to his own will, and none was able to stand before him; for he soon rendered himself master of Cælo-Syria and Palestine; the Jews meeting him in a solemn procession, supplying him with provisions, and assisting him to besiege the garrison which Scopas had left in the citadel. Thus he stood in the glorious land, and his power was established in Judæa. The next clause may be rendered, *which shall be perfected, prosper, or flourish, in his hand*. The original will admit of this sense, and the event confirms it; for Antiochus, to reward and encourage the Jews in their fidelity and obedience to him, ordered their city to be repaired, and the dispersed Jews to return and inhabit it; commanded them to be supplied with provisions for sacrifices, and with materials for finishing the temple; and that they should all live according to the laws of their country; exempted the priests and elders, scribes and Levites, from the capitation and other taxes; and ordered that those who returned

within

do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him: and he shall stand in the glorious land, which by his hand shall be consumed.

17 He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do: and he shall give him the daughter of women, corrupting her: but she shall not stand *on his side*, neither be for him.

18 After this shall he turn his face unto the

isles, and shall take many: but a prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease; without his own reproach he shall cause *it* to turn upon him.

19 Then he shall turn his face towards the fort of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found.

20 Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes *in* the glory of the kingdom: but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger nor in battle.

within a limited term should be free from all tribute for three years, and have a third part of the tribute thenceforward to become due remitted to them for ever: and also, that as many as had been taken and forced into servitude, should be released, and their substance restored to them. What is said about *finishing* the temple, answers exactly to the word *perfected*, or *consummated*, in the Hebrew; and so it is rendered and explained by Theodoret and the LXX. See Newton.

Ver. 17. He shall also set his face, &c.] Rather, He shall also set his face to enter by force the whole kingdom: for Antiochus, not contented with having rent the principal provinces from Egypt, was forming schemes for that purpose. If the next words be rightly translated, the upright ones are the Jews, who marched under the banners of Antiochus, and are so denominated to distinguish them from the idolatrous soldiers. The LXX and Vulgate, however, give a more probable rendering; he shall set things right, or make agreement with him, as the phrase is used, ver. 6. Antiochus would have seized upon Egypt by force; but, as he was meditating a war with the Romans, he judged it better to proceed with Ptolemy by stratagem. For this purpose, we read, he shall give him the daughter of women, his daughter, so called, as being one of the most eminent and beautiful women: and accordingly he proposed a treaty of marriage to Ptolemy, betrothed his daughter Cleopatra to him in the seventh year of his reign, married her to him in the thirteenth, conducted her himself to Raphia, where the solemnity was performed; and gave Ptolemy the provinces of Cœlo-Syria and Palestine, on condition that the revenues should be equally divided between the two kings: and all this he transacted with a fraudulent intention to corrupt her, and to induce her to betray her husband's interests. But his designs did not take effect; she shall not stand on his part, &c. Ptolemy and his generals, aware of his artifices, stood upon their guard, and Cleopatra herself affected more the cause of Ptolemy than of her father; inasmuch that she joined with him in an embassy to the Romans, to congratulate them upon their victories over her father, and to exhort them, after they had expelled him out of Greece, to prosecute the war in Asia, assuring them of her husband's and her concurrence and compliance with the commands of the senate. See Newton.

Ver. 18. After this shall he turn his face unto the isles] Antiochus fitted out one hundred large ships, and two

hundred lesser vessels, with which he turned his face unto the isles of the Mediterranean, subdued most of the maritime places on the coast of Asia, Thrace, and Greece, and took Samos, Eubœa, and many other islands. This was a great indignity and reproach offered to the Romans. But a prince, or rather a leader, or general (meaning the Roman generals) repelled the injury, and caused his reproach to cease. Acilius routed Antiochus at the straits of Thermopylæ, and expelled him from Greece. Livius and Æmilius beat his fleets at sea, and Scipio obtained a decisive victory over him in Asia, near the city Magnesia. Upon this defeat, Antiochus was necessitated to sue for peace, and obliged to submit to very degrading conditions; not to set foot in Europe; to quit all Asia on this side mount Taurus; to defray the whole charges of the war, and to give twenty hostages for the performance of these articles, one of whom was his own son Antiochus, afterwards called Epiphanes. By these means, he and his successors became tributary to the Romans: so truly did they not only cause the reproach offered by him to cease, but, greatly to their own honour, caused it to turn upon him. See Newton.

Ver. 19. Then he shall turn his face towards the fort] Antiochus, after the battle, fled away at night to Sardis, thence to Apamea; and the next day came into Syria, to Antioch, the fort of his own land. Thence he sent ambassadors to sue for peace; and within a few days after it was granted, sent part of the money demanded, and the hostages, to the Roman consul at Ephesus. Being under the greatest difficulties how to raise the stipulated sums, he marched into the eastern provinces to collect the arrears of tribute; and attempting to plunder the temple of Jupiter Belus at Elymais, he was resisted by the inhabitants, and slain, together with his attendants. See Bishop Newton.

Ver. 20. Then shall stand up—a raiser of taxes] Or, according to the original, One who causeth an exactor to pass over the glory, &c. Seleucus Philopater succeeded his father Antiochus the Great in Syria. He had an inclination to throw off the Roman yoke, but had not courage to effect it. He raised an army, with an intent to assist Pharnaces, king of Pontus; but his fear of the Romans was so great, that he disbanded his forces almost as soon as he had levied them. The annual tribute of 1000 talents was a grievous burden to him and his kingdom; and he was little more than a raiser of taxes all his days. Being informed of the money deposited in the temple of Jerusalem, he sent his

treasurer

21 ¶ And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.

22 And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflowed from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant.

23 And after the league made with him he

shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people.

24 He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do *that* which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches: yea, and he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, even for a time.

treasurer Heliodorus to seize it. This was literally *causing an exactor to pass over the glory of the kingdom*, that temple, over which even kings did honour, and magnify with their best gifts, 2 Macc. iii. 2. But within a few days, or rather years, according to the prophetic style, he was destroyed, and his reign was of short duration in comparison of his father's, being only twelve years, and his father's thirty-seven. Or perhaps it may be better expounded thus; that within few days, or years, after his attempt to plunder the temple of Jerusalem, he should be destroyed: and, not long after that, he was destroyed, neither in anger nor in battle; neither in rebellion at home, nor in war abroad; but by the treachery of Heliodorus, who, in the absence of Demetrius and Antiochus, the king's sons, thought that he had a fair opportunity to usurp the throne. See Newton. Houbigant renders this verse, *Then shall one succeed into his place, who shall send a raiser of taxes to the place honoured by kings; but, &c.*

Ver. 21. *In his estate shall stand, &c.*] Antiochus, in his return from Rome, was at Athens in Syria, when his brother died by the treachery of Heliodorus; and the honour of the kingdom was not given to him; for Heliodorus attempted to get possession of it for himself. Another party declared in favour of Ptolemy Philometor, king of Egypt, whose mother Cleopatra was the daughter of Antiochus the Great; and neither was Antiochus the right heir, but his nephew Demetrius, the son of Seleucus, who was then a hostage at Rome. However, he obtained the kingdom by flatteries. He flattered Eumenes, king of Pergamus, and Attalus his brother, and engaged their assistance. He flattered the Syrians, and gained their concurrence. He flattered the Romans, and sent ambassadors to court their favour, to pay them the arrears of their tribute, to present them besides with golden vessels of five hundred pounds weight, and to desire their friendship and alliance. Thus he came in peaceably; and as he flattered the Syrians, the Syrians flattered him again, and bestowed upon him the title of *Epiphanes*, or the *Illustrious*; but the epithet of *vile*, or rather *despicable*, here given by the prophet, agrees better with his true profligate character; and indeed a contemporary writer, and others after him, instead of *Epiphanes*, more rightly called him *Epimanes*, or the *mad-man*. See Newton.

Ver. 22—24. *And with the arms of a flood, &c.*] Or rather, more agreeably to the Hebrew, *And the arms of the overflower shall be, &c.* The arms which were overflowed before him, were those of his competitors for the crown. They were vanquished by the forces of Eumenes and Attalus, and were dissipated by the arrival of Antiochus,

whose presence disconcerted all their measures. *The prince also of the covenant*, that is, the high-priest of the Jews, was broken. As soon as Antiochus was seated on the throne, he removed Onias from the priesthood, and preferred Jason the brother of Onias for the great sums of money offered by him. But though Antiochus had made a league with Jason, yet he did not faithfully adhere to it, but acted deceitfully, and substituted his brother Menelaüs in his room by means of an armed force; because he offered him a greater sum than that which he had received from Jason. As what follows in ver. 23. does not assign a reason for any thing that preceded, it might have been translated, *And he shall come up, &c.* Antiochus Epiphanes had been many years a hostage at Rome; and coming thence with few attendants, he appeared little in Syria at first; but soon received a great increase, and became strong with a small people. By the friendship of Eumenes and Attalus, he entered peaceably upon the upper provinces: he likewise entered peaceably upon the provinces of Cælo-Syria and Palestine; and wherever he came he outdid his father, and his father's father in liberality and profusion. He scattered among them the prey, and spoil, and riches. The prey of his enemies, the spoil of temples, and the riches of his friends, as well as his own revenues, were expended in public shows, and bestowed in largesses among the people. We are told, 1 Macc. iii. 30. that in the liberal giving of gifts, he abounded above all the kings that were before him. He enriched with presents people whom he had never seen before; and sometimes, standing in the streets, would throw about his money, and cry aloud, "Let him take it, to whom fortune shall give it." His generosity was the more requisite to fix the provinces of Cælo-Syria and Palestine in his interest, because they were claimed as belonging to the king of Egypt. Ptolemy Epiphanes and his queen Cleopatra were now dead. Eulaeus and Lenæus, who were administrators of the kingdom for the young prince Ptolemy Philometor, demanded restitution of these provinces. Antiochus rejected their claim; and, foreseeing that these demands would prove the grounds of a new war between the two crowns, came to Joppa, to take a view of the frontiers, and put them in a proper state of defence. In his progress he came to Jerusalem, and was ushered into the city by torch-light with great rejoicing. Thence he went into Phœnicia, to fortify his own strong-holds, and to forecast his devices against those of the enemy. The LXX and Arabic read, *To forecast his devices against Egypt*. This he did even for a time, and employed some years in his hostile preparations. See Newton.

Ver.

25 And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand: for they shall forecast devices against him.

26 Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow: and many shall fall down slain.

27 And both these kings' hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end shall be at the time appointed.

28 Then shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant; and he shall do exploits, and return to his own land.

29 At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter.

30 ¶ For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant.

Ver. 25, 26. He shall stir up, &c.] Antiochus marched against Ptolemy, his sister's son, with a great army. The king of the south too, that is to say, the generals of Ptolemy, were stirred up to war, with very many and exceeding strong forces; and yet could not resist the fraudulent counsels of Antiochus. The two armies engaged between Pelusium and mount Casius; and Antiochus obtained the victory. In the next campaign he had greater success, routed the Egyptians, took Memphis, and made himself master of all Egypt, except Alexandria. These transactions are recorded, 1 Macc. i. 16—19. The misfortunes of Ptolemy are by the prophet ascribed to the treachery and baseness of his own ministers and subjects, ver. 26.; and it is certain, that Eulæus was a very wicked minister, and bred up the king in effeminacy, contrary to his natural inclination. Ptolemy Macron, governor of Cyprus, revolted, and delivered up that island to Antiochus; nay, even the Alexandrians, seeing the distress of Philometor, renounced their allegiance; and taking his young brother Euergetes, or Pnysson, proclaimed him king in his stead. See Bishop Newton. Instead of *shall overflow*, ver. 26. we may read, *shall be routed*.

Ver. 27. Both these kings' hearts, &c.] After Antiochus was come to Memphis, he and Philometor frequently ate and conversed together at one table; but, notwithstanding, their hearts were really bent to do mischief, and they spoke lies the one to the other. Antiochus pretended to take care of his nephew's interest, and promised to restore him to the crown, at the same time that he was plotting his ruin, and contriving to weaken the two brothers in a war against each other. On the contrary, Philometor laid the blame of the war upon his governor Eulæus, and professed great obligations to his uncle; at the same time that he resolved, on the first opportunity, to break the league, and be reconciled to his brother. Accordingly, as soon as Antiochus was withdrawn, he made proposals of accommodation; and by the mediation of their sister Cleopatra a peace was made between them, and they agreed to reign jointly in Egypt and Alexandria. But still these artifices did not prosper on either side; for neither did Antiochus obtain the kingdom, nor did Philometor utterly exclude him, as each intended; for these wars were not to have an end till the time appointed, which was not yet come. See Newton.

Ver. 28. Then shall he return, &c.] Antiochus did indeed thus return; for the spoils which he took in Egypt were of immense value. See 1 Macc. i. 19—24. On his return too from Egypt, he set his heart against the holy covenant. For while he was absent there, a false report was spread of his death; and Jason, thinking this a favourable opportunity for recovering the high-priesthood, marched with forces to Jerusalem, took it, drove Menelaüs into the castle, and exercised great cruelties upon the citizens. Antiochus hearing of this, and being informed that the people made great rejoicings at the report of his death, he determined to take a severe revenge, and went with a great army against Jerusalem. He besieged and took the city by force, slew forty thousand of the inhabitants, sold as many more for slaves, polluted the temple and altar with swine's flesh, broke into the Holy of Holies, took away the golden vessels, and other sacred treasures, to the value of one thousand eight hundred talents, restored Menelaüs to his office, and constituted one Philip, a Phrygian, governor of Judæa. See 1 Macc. i. 24. 2 Macc. v. 21. and Bishop Newton.

Ver. 29, 30. At the time appointed he shall return, &c.] Antiochus perceiving that his policy was detected, and that the two brothers had provided for their mutual safety, was so offended, that he prepared war much more eagerly and maliciously against both, than he had before against one of them. Early in the spring he set forward with his army; and, passing through Cælo-Syria, came into Egypt; and, the inhabitants of Memphis submitting to him, he came by easy marches down to Alexandria. But this expedition was not so successful as his former ones. The reason of which follows, ver. 30. The ships of Chittim came against him; these ships of Chittim which brought the Roman ambassadors to command a peace between the contending kings. See the account of this matter in the note on chap. viii. 23. The reason of the Romans acting in this imperious manner, and of Antiochus's ready obedience, was, the total conquest which Paulus Æmilius the consul had just made of the kingdom of Macedonia. It was a great mortification to Antiochus, to be thus humbled and disappointed of his prey: therefore he grieved and returned. "He led back his forces into Syria, says Polybius, grieving and groaning;" and had indignation against the holy covenant; for he vented all his anger upon the Jews; he detached

31 And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.

32 And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.

33 And they that understand among the

people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days.

34 Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries.

35 And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed.

tached Apollonius with twenty-two thousand men; who, coming to Jerusalem, slew great multitudes, plundered and set fire to the city, pulled down the houses and walls round it, and built a strong fortress on an eminence which commanded the temple: then issuing thence, they fell on those who came to worship, and shed innocent blood on every side the sanctuary, defiling it so that the temple was deserted, the whole service omitted, and the city entirely forsaken by the natives. So he did; and after his return to Antioch, he published a decree, which obliged all persons to conform to the religion of the Greeks; inasmuch that the Jewish law was abrogated, the heathen worship was set up in its stead, and the temple itself consecrated to Jupiter Olympius. In the transacting of these matters, he had intelligence with them that forsook the covenant; with Menelaüs and the other apostate Jews of his party, who were the king's chief instigators against their religion and country. This is asserted by the writer of 1 Macc. i. 41, &c. 2 Macc. vi. 1, 9 and confirmed by Josephus de Bell. Jud. lib. 1. cap. i. sect. 1. It may be proper to pause a little here, and reflect how particular and circumstantial this prophecy is concerning the kingdoms of Egypt and Syria, from the death of Alexander to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. There is not so concise, comprehensive, and regular an account of their kings and affairs to be found in any authors of those times. The prophecy is really more perfect than any history; and is so wonderfully exact, not only to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, but likewise equally so beyond that time, that we may conclude in the words of the inspired writer, "No one could thus know the times or the seasons, but he who hath them in his own power." See Acts, i. 7. and Bishop Newton.

Ver. 31. *And arms shall stand on his part, &c.*] After Antiochus, arms, that is, the Romans, shall stand up. As מַמְלֶכָה *mimelch*, signifies *after the kings* in ver. 8. so מִמֶּנּוּ *mimennu*, may here signify *after him*. See also Neh. xiii. 21. and ver. 23. of this chapter, in the original. Arms, says Sir Isaac Newton, are every where in this prophecy put for the military power of a kingdom; and they stand up, when they conquer and grow powerful. Hitherto Daniel had described the actions of the kings of the north and south; but upon the conquest of Macedon by the Romans, he left off describing the actions of the Greeks, and began to describe those of the Romans in Greece; who conquered Macedon, Illyricum, and Epirus, in the year of Nabonassar 580. Thirty-five years after this, by the will of Attalus,

they inherited all Asia westward of mount Tartarus; sixty-nine years afterwards they conquered the kingdom of Syria, and reduced it into a province; and thirty-four years after that they did the like to Egypt. By all these steps the Roman arms stood up over the Greeks; and after ninety-five years more, by making war upon the Jews, they polluted the sanctuary of strength [the temple, so called by reason of its fortifications], and took away their daily sacrifice; and then placed the abomination of desolation: for that this abomination was thus placed after the days of Christ, appears from Matt. xxiv. 15. In the 16th year of the emperor Adrian, and of our Lord 132, they placed the abomination by building a temple to Jupiter Capitolinus, where the temple of God in Jerusalem stood; upon which the Jews, under the conduct of Barchocab, rose up in arms against the Romans, and in the war had fifty cities demolished, nine hundred and fifty of their best towns destroyed, and five hundred and eighty thousand men slain by the sword; and in the end of the war, in the year 136, were banished Judæa on pain of death; and thenceforward the land remained desolate. See Sir Isaac Newton's Observations on Daniel, and Bishop Newton.

Ver. 32, 33. *Such as do wickedly, &c.*] All these things are applicable to the Christian Jews; for now the daily sacrifice was taken away, the temple was given to desolation, and the Christian church had succeeded in the place of the Jewish; the new covenant in the room of the old. The Roman magistrates and officers, that power who took away the daily sacrifice, made use of the most alluring promises, as well as the most terrible threats to corrupt, and prevail upon the primitive Christians to renounce their religion, and offer incense to the statues of the emperors, and images of the gods: but the true Christians, the people who knew their God was strong, remained firm to their religion. It may also with the strictest propriety be said of these primitive Christians, that being despised every where, and preaching the Gospel in all parts of the Roman empire, they instructed many, and gained a great number of converts to their religion: yet they fell by the sword, and by flame, and by captivity, and by spoil many days; for they were exposed to the malice and fury of ten persecutions, and suffered all manner of afflictions and tortures, with little intermission, for the space of three hundred years. See Bishop Newton.

Ver. 34, 35. *When they shall fall, &c.*] The church had laboured under long and severe persecutions from the civil power. The tenth and last was begun by Dioclesian; it

36 ¶ And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done.

37 Neither shall he regard the God of his

fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all.

38 But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things.

raged ten years, and was suppressed entirely by Constantine, the first Roman emperor who embraced Christianity; and then the church was protected and favoured by the civil arm. But this is called only a *little help*; because, though it added much to the temporal prosperity, yet it contributed little to the spiritual graces and virtues of Christians: it enlarged their revenues, but proved the fatal means of corrupting the doctrine and relaxing the discipline of the church. It was attended with this peculiar disadvantage, that *many clave to them with flatteries*; many became Christians only because the emperor was so. Moreover, this is called a *little help*, because the temporal peace and prosperity of the church lasted but a little while. The spirit of persecution presently revived; and no sooner were the Christians delivered from the fury of their adversaries, than they began to quarrel among themselves, and to persecute one another. Such, more or less, has been the fate of the church ever since; and generally speaking, *those of understanding have fallen a sacrifice to others*; some of the best and wisest, to some of the worst and the most ignorant in divine things. These calamities were to befall Christians, *to try, and to purge, and to make them white*, not only at that time, but *even to the time of the end*, even to the latter days; *because it is yet for an appointed time*. And it is not a great while since we have seen, not to allege other instances, how the poor protestants were persecuted, plundered, and murdered in the southern parts of France; and we have also seen the just retaliation of a holy and jealous God. See Newton.

Ver. 36. The king shall do, &c.] The prophet was speaking of the persecutions which should be permitted for the trial of the church after the empire was become Christian; and now he proceeds to describe the principal author of them. A *king* or *kingdom*, as we have before observed, signifies any government, state, or potentate; and the meaning of this verse we conceive to be, that after the empire was become Christian, there should spring up in the church an antichristian power, which should act in the most arbitrary manner, exalt itself above all laws, divine and human, dispense with the most solemn and sacred obligations, and in many respects enjoin what God had forbidden, and forbid what God had commanded. This power began in the Roman emperors, who summoned councils, and directed their determinations as they pleased. After the division of the empire, this power increased, and was executed principally by the Greek emperors in the East, and by the bishops of Rome in the West. This power too was to continue in the church, and *prosper till the indignation be accomplished; for that which is determined shall be done*. This is the same as what was called in chap.

viii. 19. *the last end of the indignation*; and chap. ix. 27. *the consummation*; and means the last end and consummation of God's indignation against the Jews; and this seems more clearly expressed, chap. xii. 7. So long is this antichristian power to continue! We see it still subsisting in the church of Rome; and it was an ancient tradition among the Jewish doctors, that the destruction of Rome and the restoration of the Jews shall fall out about the same period. It is a saying of Rabbi David Kimchi, "When Rome shall be laid waste, there shall be redemption for Israel." See note on chap. viii. 14. and Bishop Newton.

Ver. 37. Neither shall he regard the god, &c.] The prophet's intention is, to blame the power here mentioned for apostatizing in some measure from the religion of his Christian fathers, as he actually did both in the Greek and Latin church by worshipping *Mabuzzim*, instead of the true God. Another property of the power here described is, that he should *not regard the desire of women*. The interpretation is easy of Antichrist, that he should therefore counterfeit chastity, that he might deceive many. The Vulgate reads, *And he shall regard, &c.* But this is plainly contrary to the original, and most other versions. The word used for *women*, properly signifies *wives*, as *desire* does *conjugal affection*. The meaning, therefore, of *not regarding the desire of women* is, neglecting and discouraging marriage, as both the Greeks and Latins did, to the great discredit of the Christian religion. The Julian and Papian laws were enacted in favour of those who were married and had children. Constantine repealed them, and allowed equal or greater immunities to those who were unmarried and had no children. Nay, he held those in the highest veneration who devoted themselves to a monastic life; and almost adored the company of perpetual virgins, from a persuasion, that the God to whom they were consecrated did in a most peculiar or supereminent manner dwell in their minds. His example was followed by his successors; the married clergy were discountenanced, the monks were honoured, and in the fourth century first overran the Eastern church, and afterward the Western, like a torrent. This was evidently *not regarding the desire of wives*, or conjugal affection. At first, only second marriages were prohibited; but in time the clergy were absolutely restrained from marrying at all. So much did the power here described *magnify himself above all*, even God himself, by contradicting the primary law of God and nature; and making that dishonourable which the Scripture hath pronounced *honourable in all*; Heb. xiii. 4. See Bishop Newton.

Ver. 38. But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces] The

39 Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain.

40 ¶ And at the time of the end shall the

king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over.

The original word rendered *forces*, is מַבֻּזִּים *mauzzim*, which is taken personally, and retained in the versions of the LXX and Vulgate. It is derived from the radical verb מָצָה, signifying *he was strong*; and its proper meaning is *munitions, bulwarks, fortresses*: but, the Hebrews often using abstracts for concretes, it signifies equally, *protectors, defenders, and guardians*. This being the derivation and signification of the word, the verse may be literally translated, *And the god Mabuzzim, in his estate shall be honour; even a god whom, &c.* But if it be thought requisite to separate the word *God* and *Mabuzzim*, and to express the force of the Hebrew particle *ל* *lamed*, then the verse may be translated, *And with God, or instead of God, Mabuzzim in his estate shall be honour; even with God, or instead of God, those whom his fathers knew not, shall be honour with gold, &c.* However it be translated, the meaning evidently is, that he should establish the worship of *Mabuzzim*, of *protectors, defenders, and guardians*. He should worship them *as God, or with God*; and who is there so little acquainted with ecclesiastical history, as not to know that the worship of *saints* and *angels* was established both in the Greek and Latin church? They were not only invocated and adored as *patrons, intercessors, protectors, and guardians*, but miracles were ascribed to them; their very relics were worshipped, and their shrines and images adorned with the most costly offerings, and honoured with *gold and silver, with precious stones, and desirable things*. And what renders the completion of the prophecy more remarkable is, that they were celebrated and adored under the very title of *Mabuzzim*, of *bulwarks and fortresses, of protectors and guardians*; as appears from various striking passages in the writings of Basil, Chrysostome, Hilary, Gregory Nyssen, Eucherius, Theodoret, and others. This superstition began to prevail in the fourth century; and in the eighth, in the year 787, the worship of images, &c. was fully established by the seventh general council,—the second that was held at Nice. See Bishop Newton.

Ver. 39. Thus shall he do—with a strange god, &c.] The worship of *Mabuzzim* was indeed the worship of a *strange God*, both to those who imposed it, and to those who received it in the church. But, for the better understanding this part of the prophecy, it may be proper to propose a more literal translation. *Thus shall he do; to the defenders of Mabuzzim, together with the strange God whom he shall acknowledge, he shall multiply honour, and he shall cause them to rule over many; and the earth he shall divide for a reward.* In our Bible translation it is, *Thus shall he do in the most strong holds; or, as we read in the Margin, In the fortresses of munitions, with a strange god*: but here *Mabuzzim* is not taken personally, as it was in the foregoing verse, *Whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory*, says our version; but there is no conjunction like *and* before *increase*, and no

preposition like *with* before *glory* in the original. The latter part is nearly the same in all translations; but in our Bible version there is nothing to which *them* can be referred:—*and he shall cause them to rule over many*: for it cannot well be said, that he shall cause the *strong holds* to rule over many. Let us now consider how these inconveniences may be wholly avoided by a new translation. *Thus shall he do*;—so the same words are rendered ver. 30. but then here a stop is to be made. *To the defenders of Mabuzzim, or to the priests of Mabuzzim.* Here the force of the Hebrew particle is expressed; here again the abstract is used for the concrete, as in the foregoing verse; *holds or fortresses for defenders, and supporters for priests*, as it may be translated. It is manifest that persons must be meant, because they are said afterwards *to rule over many*.—*Together with the strange god whom he shall acknowledge*: this is the most usual signification of the preposition; and if *Mabuzzim* be not considered as the strange god, it is difficult to say who the *strange god* is. *He shall multiply honour*: there is no conjunction or preposition inserted without authority from the original. *He shall multiply honour*: the noun is as the verb in the preceding verse, *he shall honour*. *He shall multiply honour* to the defenders and champions of *Mabuzzim*, as well as to *Mabuzzim* themselves. Deifying *Mabuzzim*, he shall glorify their priests and ministers; and *he shall cause them to rule over many, and the earth he shall divide for a reward.* The prophecy thus expounded, the completion becomes obvious. The defenders and champions of *Mabuzzim* were the monks, priests, and bishops of the Roman church; and of them it may most truly be said, *That they were increased with honour, and ruled over many, and divided the land for gain.* That they have been honoured, revered, and almost adored in former ages; that their authority and jurisdiction have extended over the purses and consciences of men; that they have been enriched with noble buildings and large endowments, and have had the choicest of the lands appropriated for church lands, are points of such public notoriety, that they require no proof. See Newton.

Ver. 40. At the—end shall the king of the south push, &c.] The kings of the *south*, and of the *north*, are to be explained according to the times of which the prophet is speaking. As long as the kingdoms of Egypt and Syria were subsisting, so long the Egyptian and Syrian kings were *kings of the south*, and of the *north*: but when these kingdoms were swallowed up in the Roman empire, other powers became the kings of the south and north. *At the time of the end*, that is to say, in the latter days of the Roman empire, *shall the king of the south push at him*; that is to say, the Saracens, who were of the Arabians, and came from the *south*; and under the conduct of their

41 He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many *countries* shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, *even* Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.

42 He shall stretch forth his hand also upon

the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape.

43 But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians *shall be* at his steps.

false prophet Mahomet, and his successors, made war upon the emperor Heraclius, and with amazing rapidity deprived him of Egypt, Syria, and many of his finest provinces. They were only to *push at*, and forcibly wound the Greek empire; they were not to subvert and destroy it.—*And the king of the north shall come*, &c. that is, the Turks, who were originally of the Scythians, and came from the north; and, after the Saracens, seized on Syria, and assaulted the remains of the Grecian empire, and in time rendered themselves absolute masters of the whole. The Saracens dismembered and weakened the Greek empire, but the Turks totally ruined and destroyed it; and for this reason much more is said of the Turks than of the Saracens. Their *chariots* and their *horsemen* are particularly mentioned, because their armies consisted chiefly of *horse*, especially before the institution of the janissaries; and their standards are still *horse tails*. Their *ships* too are said to be *many*; and indeed without many ships they could never have got possession of so many islands and maritime countries, nor have so frequently vanquished the Venetians. What fleets, what armies, were employed in besieging and taking Constantinople, Negropont or Eubœa, Rhodes, Cyprus, and Candy, or Crete! The words, *shall enter into the countries, and overflow and pass over*, give us an exact idea of their *passing over* into Europe, and fixing the seat of their empire at Constantinople, as they did under their seventh emperor, Mahomet II. See Bishop Newton.

Ver. 41. *He shall enter also into the glorious land*] The same expression was used in ver. 16. and in both places is rendered by the Syriac, *the land of Israel*. Now it is well known, that the Turks took possession of the Holy Land, and remain masters of it to this day; Selim *entered into Jerusalem* in his way to Egypt. *Many countries shall be overthrown*: Aleppo, Damascus, Gaza, and the neighbouring cities, were forced to submit, and receive the yoke of the conqueror. *But these shall escape*, &c. *These*, were some of the people who inhabited Arabia: and the Arabians and Turks have never been able, with all their forces, to subdue it entirely. Selim subdued the neighbouring countries, but could not make a complete conquest of the Arabians. Ever since his time the Ottoman emperors have paid them an annual pension of 40,000 crowns in gold, for the safe passage of the caravans and pilgrims going to Mecca. This pension was not paid for some years on account of the war with Hungary; and what was the consequence?—One of the Arabian princes, in the year 1694, attacked and plundered the caravan going on pilgrimage to Mecca, and made them all prisoners. Among the captives was the cham of Tartary, whom the Arabians dismissed upon his parole, that he should carry their complaints to the sultan, and procure the continuance

of the pension. He stood to his engagement, and never ceased importuning the Ottoman court, till the arrears of the pension were paid. But, notwithstanding this pension, the Arabs, as often as they find a lucky opportunity, rob and plunder the Turks, as well as other travellers. An instance of which kind happened in December 1758; so constantly have the Arabs maintained the same spirit in all ages! Armies have been sent out against them, but without success. They have commonly been too cunning for their enemies; and when it was thought that they were well nigh surrounded and taken, they have still *escaped out of their hands*. So well does this particular prediction agree with that general one in Gen. xvi. 12. concerning the main body of the nation. See Newton.

Ver. 42, 43. *He shall stretch forth his hand also*] The proper application of this passage is to the Ottoman emperor. This *stretching forth his hand* implies, that his dominion should be of large extent; and he has *stretched forth his hand upon many*, not only Asian and European, but likewise African countries. *Egypt*, in particular, fell under his yoke; and the conquest of that and the neighbouring countries follows next in order after the conquest of Judæa. Selim, having routed and slain Gauri, sultan of Egypt, became master of all Syria and Judæa. He then marched into Egypt against Tumanbäi, the new sultan, whom he took prisoner, and ordered to be hanged; thus putting an end to the government of the Mamelucs, and establishing that of the Turks in Egypt. The prophet says particularly, that *he should have power over the treasures, &c. of Egypt*. And history informs us, that when Cairo was taken, “the Turks rifled the houses, and suffered “nothing to be kept from them; and that Selim caused “500 of the best families of the Egyptians to be transported to Constantinople, as likewise a great number of “the Mamelucs, besides the *sultan’s treasure*, and other “*vast riches*.” And since that time it is impossible to say what treasures have been drained from this rich and fertile, but oppressed and wretched country. The prophecy says farther, that some other of the African nations should submit to the conqueror; *the Libyans and the Ethiopians should be at his steps*: and we read in history, that, after the conquest of Egypt, “the terror of Selim’s many “victories spreading wide, the kings of Africa, bordering upon Cyrenaica, sent their ambassadors with proffers “to become his tributaries; and that other more remote “nations also were easily induced to join in amity with “the Turks.” One thing more is observable, with regard to this prophetic history of Egypt,—that the particular prophecy coincides exactly with the general one, as it did before in the instance of Arabia. In Ezek. xxix. 14. and xxx. 12. it is foretold, that Egypt should become a *littè kingdom*, and subject to strangers; and here it is foretold,

44 But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many.

45 And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.

told, that in the latter times it should be a province of the Turks, as we see at this day. See Newton.

Ver. 44, 45. *But tidings—shall trouble him*] These two verses, probably, remain yet to be fulfilled. Instead of palace, ver. 45. we may read camp; and for glorious holy mountain—the mountain of delight of holiness. The Hebrew word אֶפְדָּן *apadno*, translated, his palace, or camp, occurs in Jonathan's Targum; on Jer. xliii. 10. and there signifies pavilion; to which same purpose it might be here rendered, *He shall plant the tabernacles of his camp, between the seas, in the glorious holy mountain.* In the application of this prophecy to the Ottoman empire, as these events are yet future, we cannot pretend to point them out with any certainty. The tidings from the east and north, may be those of the return of Judah and Israel from those quarters; for Judah was carried captive at first into the east, and Israel by the Assyrians into the north. Concerning the reduction of the north, see Jer. xvi. 14, 15. xxiii. 8. xxxi. 8. Or, if the tidings from the north may be some other thing, yet those from the east may be applied to the Jews' return, from Rev. xvi. 12. where the waters of the great river Euphrates are dried up, to prepare the way of the kings of the east. If this application be not admitted, yet it is universally known, that the Persians are seated to the east of the Ottoman dominions, and the Russians to the north. Persia has, indeed, of late been miserably torn by intestine divisions; but if it should unite again under one sovereign, it may become a dangerous rival to the Ottoman empire. The power of Russia is growing daily; and it is a current tradition among the common people in Turkey, that their empire shall be destroyed by the Russians. However this may be, the Porte is at all times jealous of the junction of the two powers of Persia and Russia, and exerts all its policy to prevent it. Whatever may be the motive and occasion, the Turk shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many. Between the seas, in the glorious holy mountain, must denote some part of the Holy Land. There the Turk shall encamp, with all his power; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him; none shall help him effectually, or deliver him. See Bishop Newton.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The first verse properly belongs to the foregoing chapter, and declares how instrumental Gabriel had been already in farthering the restoration of the Jewish people: he stood to confirm and to strengthen Darius as soon as he had ascended the throne, in conjunction with Cyrus, in his purpose of releasing the captive Jews, when, probably, many opposed it. God's people often have friends that they little think of; and more and mightier are with them than can be against them.

CHAP. XII.

Michael shall deliver Israel from their troubles. Daniel is informed of the times.

[Before Christ 534.]

AND at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall

2dly, The angel, as he had promised, here leads the prophet into futurity.

1. He begins with the Persian monarchy, which had just arisen: three others should succeed Darius, then on the throne; see the annotations: and a fourth, richer than all the rest, should arise, Xerxes, who by his strength and riches should stir up all his own provinces and confederates, to raise an army the most numerous that probably was ever assembled, in order to invade the Grecian territories. Of which expedition, and of his shameful defeat, heathen historians are full.

2. He passes on to the Grecian monarchy: to avenge this attack, a mighty king should arise, even Alexander; who, having subdued the Persian empire, should set up his own despotic throne, and govern with absolute sway: but his kingdom should be quickly broken and divided, not among his posterity, but among others, his four great generals; who neither ruled such extensive dominions, nor with so absolute a sway, as Alexander had alone. So poor and transitory are human possessions: he that layeth up riches, cannot tell who shall gather them!

3dly, The angel proceeds with the account of those events in two of these divided kingdoms, with which the people of the Jews were more nearly concerned. But see the annotations. Note; The kingdoms of this world are transitory indeed; blessed be God for that which never fadeeth away, where no wars disturb, nor enemies enter; but an eternal rest remaineth for the faithful.

4thly, We have a long prophecy concerning Antiochus Epiphanes, the inveterate persecutor of the Jewish people.

He is described as a *wile person*. He had been a hostage at Rome, and by his immoralities, debaucheries, and extravagancies, had rendered himself despicable, and gained the title of *Epimanes*, the Madman, though on his coming to the crown he assumed that of *Epiphanes*, the Idusfrizus. But God in his due time brought to a shameful end this great enemy of him and his people. See the annotations.

From the whole we may most justly infer, that God will interpose for his people in the time of need; and, however their enemies may seem for a while to prevail, they shall be rooted out at last.

CHAP. XII.

Ver. 1. *And there shall be a time of trouble*] When the Jews are to be restored, there shall be such calamities as the nations never before experienced since men were formed into civil societies. Tribulations are often mentioned in Scripture, as preceding extraordinary events, see Ezek. xxx.

be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation *even* to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one *that shall be found written in the book.*

2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame *and* everlasting contempt.

3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.

4 But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, *even* to the time of the

end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

5 ¶ Then I Daniel looked, and behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river.

6 And *one* said to the man clothed in linen, which *was* upon the waters of the river, How long *shall it be* to the end of these wonders?

7 And I heard the man clothed in linen, which *was* upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever, that *it shall be* for a time,

2, 3. and especially as ushering in the kingdom of God, whether that kingdom relate to the first or second advent of the Messiah. See Isai. viii. 22. Jerem. xxx. 7. Mat. xxiv. 21. at which last place an expression is used of like import with this of Daniel. This unusual and extraordinary time of trouble is supposed to correspond with that represented by St. John, as to follow upon the pouring out of the seventh vial. Rev. xvi. 18. Yet the people of God shall escape.

Ver. 2. Many—that sleep—shall awake] Though this verse, without all question, primarily refers to some great and future restoration of the Jewish people; yet in a secondary sense, it may well be understood of the resurrection from the dead. *Many* is here used for *all*, in the same manner as St. Paul uses it in Rom. v. 15. 19. See Calmet.

Ver. 3. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament] *And those that have wisely instructed shall shine like the splendour of the firmament: or, as the heavens adorned with the sun and the other glorious lights.* In the Hebrew the first word is the same participle as at chap. xi. 33. and the whole verse seems intended as an encouragement to those teachers especially, who were to fall, and to suffer such distresses as in the fore-mentioned passage are described. Cappellus observes of the two clauses of this verse, that one member is *ἐξηγητικόν*, or explanatory of the other: the splendour of the firmament and the splendour of the stars is the same; and those that have taught, and those who have justified many, must mean those, who by teaching and by good example have successfully, through the grace of God, shewed the way to righteousness and life eternal. The Judge of all the earth will certainly do right: he has given the fullest assurance that there is a reward for the righteous; and it is certain, that this reward will be augmented in proportion as men have been more extensively useful, or have advanced the real and best interest of their fellow-creatures. In the last verse the reward and the punishment are expressed generally as to their degree, and merely said to be perpetual in their duration: in this they are exalted to the highest pitch of distinction in their degree, and their duration is pointed

out in the strongest form of expressing eternity. *Vulg. in perpetuas aternitates. Gr. εις τας αιωνας και ετι.* The design of which is, to convince the eminently holy and useful, that they are in a more especial manner the favourites of heaven, and may with greater confidence expect their reward. The glories of the future world are adumbrated in Scripture by the loftiest and most splendid images in this; but after all, so inadequate is language, and so inferior the conceptions of the human mind to this great subject, that the finest description of the joys of eternity is that negative one of St. Paul, which he has in some measure borrowed from Isaiah, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” See Bishop Lowth on Isai. lxiv. 4.

Ver. 5. Behold, there stood other two] Two other angels stood one on each side of the river Hiddekel or Tigris, chap. x. 4, 5., and were attendants on that superior one who appeared there in so bright and glorious a form. Gabriel had finished his narrative, and what now follows seems added by way of illustration.

Ver. 6. And one said, &c.] And I said. Houbigant. See ver. 8.

Ver. 7. A time, times, and an half] This signifies three prophetic years and an half, making one thousand two hundred and sixty *prophetic days*, or one thousand two hundred and sixty *years*. The same time, therefore, is prefixed for the desolation and oppression of the Eastern church, as for the tyranny of the *little horn* in the Western church, chap. vii. 25. And it is wonderfully remarkable, that the doctrine of Mahomet was first forged at Mecca, and the supremacy of the pope was established by virtue of a grant from the tyrant Phocas, in the very same year of Christ, 606. There is a farther notation of time in the last clause: When the Jews shall be recalled from the dispersion, then all these things shall receive their full and final completion. See Newton. Mr. Wintle reads the last clause of this verse, *And after the accomplishment of the dispersions of the holy people, all these things shall be fulfilled.*

Ver.

times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these *things* shall be finished.

8 And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my LORD, what *shall be* the end of these *things*?

9 And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words *are* closed up and sealed till the time of the end.

10 Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly:

and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.

11 And from the time *that* the daily *sacrifice* shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, *there shall be* a thousand two hundred and ninety days.

12 Blessed *is* he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.

13 But go thou thy way till the end *be*: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.

Ver. 8. And I heard, but I understood not] The prophets did not always receive the interpretation of what was revealed to them. See 1 Pet. i. 12. Study and particular application were required, and often an immediate revelation. The evidence which appears to us so clearly in the greater part of the prophecies that respect the Lord Jesus Christ, and the establishment of the church, was exceedingly obscure to the generality before the event. It was the same with respect to those which concerned the persecutions of Antiochus. This prophecy is of distant reference and interpretation; it is necessary, therefore, that it should be involved in obscurity. What is delivered may satisfy the minds of the pious and faithful; but it is not meant that the curious should be gratified, that human pride should be indulged, or that the counsels of God should be made subservient to the ambition of princes, or any sinister designs of man.

Ver. 11, 12. From the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, &c.] The *days* here mentioned are still prophetic days or years. The *setting up the abomination of desolation* appears to be a general phrase, and comprehensive of many events. It is applied, 1 Macc. i. 54. to the profanation of the temple by Antiochus; and by our Lord, Matt. xxiv. 15. to the destruction of the city and temple by the Romans. It may for the same reason be applied to the Roman emperor Adrian's building a temple to Jupiter Capitolinus, in the same place where the temple of God had stood. It may with equal justice be applied to the Mahometans invading and desolating Christendom, and converting churches into mosques; and this latter event seems to have been particularly intended in this passage. If this interpretation be true, the religion of Mahomet will prevail in the East for the space of one thousand two hundred and sixty years, and then a great and glorious revolution will follow, which, I verily believe, refers to the destruction of Antichrist, and the restoration of the Jews. But another still greater and more glorious will succeed; and what can this be, but the full conversion of the Gentiles to the church of Christ, and the beginning of the Millennium, or reign of the saints upon earth? Here then are three different periods assigned, one thousand two hundred and sixty years, one thousand two hundred and ninety years, and one thousand three hundred and thirty-five years; but what is the precise time of their beginning, and consequently of their ending, as well as what are the great and

signal events which will take place at the end of each period, we can only conjecture; time alone with certainty will discover. But, however, the uncertainty of these events, which remain yet to be fulfilled, cannot shake the credit and certainty of those which have already been accomplished. Upon the whole, what an amazing prophecy is this! Comprehending so many various events, and extending through so many succeeding ages, from the first establishment of the Persian empire, above five hundred and thirty years before Christ, even to the general resurrection! And the farther it extends, and the more it comprehends, the more amazing and the more divine it must appear. What stronger and more convincing proofs can be given or required of a divine Providence, and a divine revelation,—that there is a God who directs and orders the transactions of the world; and that Daniel was a prophet divinely inspired by him, *a man greatly beloved*, as he is often addressed by an angel! Our blessed Saviour has bestowed upon him the appellation of *Daniel the prophet*, Matt. xxiv. 15. and that is authority sufficient for any Christian. But in the course of these notes, such instances and attestations of his being a prophet have been produced, as an infidel cannot deny, or, if he deny, cannot disprove. In short, we see how well Daniel deserves the character which his cotemporary Ezekiel has given of him, ch. xiv. and xxviii. for his *piety and wisdom*; and these, in the true sense, always go together; for as the angel says above, ver. 10. *None of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand. Happy are they who both know the will of God, and do it!* See Bishop Newton's Diff.

Ver. 13. Till the end be] *To thy station. Rest and continue in thy lot, till the end of thy days.* It is hereby signified, that Daniel should live in peace and tranquillity till the end of his days; and that the evils which had just been shewn him were yet at a great distance: and it also, probably, signifies, that Daniel should be a partaker of all the privileges of the first resurrection, and have then a glorious lot with the saints of God. See Rev. xx. 5, 6.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, When the troubles of God's faithful people are at their height, the power and grace of their Redeemer shall be the more magnified in their deliverance; and especially at the resurrection of the dead and the great day of judgment.

1. In that great day of the appearing of our God and Saviour,

Saviour, an awful distinction will be made between the persons who shall awake from the dust of death; some of them arising to *everlasting life*, while others, who died impenitent, shall awake to *shame and everlasting contempt*; which would be a glorious encouragement for the sufferers under the persecution of Antiochus, (see Heb. xi. 35.) as it is to all the suffering saints of God to the end of time.

2. The reward of the faithful will then be great. *The wise*, who perseveringly know and believe in Jesus to the saving of their souls; deep read in their own sinful state by nature, the sufficiency of the Redeemer's blood and infinite merit, and the divine operations of the Holy Spirit; these shall shine as *the brightness of the firmament*, perfectly holy, and happy, and glorious as their Lord; *and they that turn many to righteousness*, the ministers of the gospel, and others who laboured for this blessed purpose, to bring men to the knowledge of a Redeemer's sacrifice, intercession, and infinite merit, as the only ground of their acceptance with God, and to convert their souls to the love and practice of holiness, they shall shine as *the stars for ever and ever*, with undiminished lustre through the ages of eternity. A powerful engagement this, to those who are put in trust with the gospel, to labour with fidelity and zeal in the blessed cause, when every soul converted by their ministry shall add a jewel to their crown.

3. Daniel is commanded to *seal the book even to the time of the end*; either he was to keep the vision secret, or it would not be understood or regarded till the times of trial came, which were at a distance; or it intimates the darkness and obscurity of the book, till the accomplishment of the events should discover the meaning of the prophetic word. *Many shall run to and fro*, at the end of time, when the things here spoken of begin to be fulfilled, earnestly searching into this sealed book: *and knowledge shall be increased*; light will then be cast on the prophecies; so that the diligent inquirer shall be able to understand them more fully than they had ever been understood before. *Note*: (1.) They who would draw knowledge from the deep well of prophetic truth must diligently examine and compare spiritual things with spiritual, and in prayer fervently ask divine illumination. (2.) However dark and obscure any of the prophecies may now be, the time will come when they will be clear as if written with a sunbeam.

2dly, The mysterious things before spoken naturally excited in the prophet's mind the desire to know *when the end of these things should be*, and *what would be the sign of their conclusion*.

1. *How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?* This question is put by one of the angels who stood by the river, in the prophet's hearing, to the glorious personage who stood upon, or above, the waters of the river. Daniel, probably, feared to be too inquisitive; and though he wished to know, yet dared not ask. The answer is ushered in with great solemnity: the celestial personage, lifting up his hand to heaven, by a solemn oath for the confirmation of the faith of his servant (see Rev. x. 5, 6.), declares, that the troubles will continue *for a time, times, and an half*: and *when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished*. This is to be applied to the reign and fall of Antichrist,

the same numbers being used, Rev. xi. 2, 3. xii. 6—14. when the dispersion of the Jews shall end, and they shall be gathered out of all lands: which blessed event may the Lord hasten in his time!

2. *What shall be the end of these things?* Encouraged by the answer which had been given, but not understanding the meaning of what he heard, Daniel himself is emboldened to ask, *what events would more distinctly mark the conclusion of these troubles?* or, as the words may be rendered, *what is the last of these things?* *Note*: (1.) Through the darkness of their minds, the greatest saints are often at a loss in their inquiries, and humbly own their ignorance. (2.) We have one to apply to under all our doubts and difficulties, who is able to solve them. (3.) When we see the prevalence of iniquity, and the triumphs of the ungodly, we are ready in amazement to cry, *What will be the end of these things?* as if the cause of Christ was utterly overwhelmed; but it shall prevail at last over all opposition.

The answer given to the prophet's inquiry is very gracious: he shall know as much as he needs, and is bid to be content about the rest. *Go thy way, Daniel*; be satisfied with what thou hast heard, and prepare for eternity; *for the words are closed up, and sealed till the time of the end*, will continue till then more or less dark and obscure, when time would interpret the vision. *Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried*, by their afflictions, and come like silver from the furnace; *but the wicked shall do wickedly*; persisting in their impenitence, and given up to judicial blindness of heart. *None of the wicked shall understand*, neither the word nor the providences of God; *but the wise shall understand both, and improve thereby*. And, as to the immediate solution of the question, he gives him some dates by which it might be known: *from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days*; which some refer to what Antiochus did, but is also to be referred to Antichrist; who, in opposition to the one sacrifice of Christ, has set up the merits of man, established the worship of saints and images, and other abominations. The length of this state of trouble is declared to be *a thousand two hundred and ninety days*, see Rev. xiii. 5. The days here added to the number there given are, as some think, the space allotted for the conversion of the Jews. *Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days*, at the end of which all the enemies of Christ and his people will, it is supposed, be utterly destroyed, and times of the greatest happiness and joy succeed. The period of these events indeed still remains a secret; but of this the people of God may be sure, that the end of all the sufferings of his church hastens apace; that we are called with patience to wait for the blessed day; and that our happiness will then be complete and everlasting.

The concluding answer is a word of comfort, particularly addressed to Daniel himself. *Go thou thy way till the end be*; prepare for death, and wait for the resurrection morn; *for thou shalt rest*, dying in the Lord, and delivered for ever from all the burthens of mortality; *and stand in thy lot at the end of the days*; raised to a glorious inheritance at the last, and put in possession of that eternal kingdom which God hath prepared for those who are faithful unto death.

death. *Note;* (1.) While God continues us upon earth, our business is to be found in the work that he has given us to do, waiting for our dismissal, and ever ready to receive it with joy. (2.) A child of God, like Noah's dove, must not expect his rest in this tempestuous world; but when his head rests upon a pillow of dust, then shall his soul find rest in the Saviour's bosom. (3.) Whatever

our lot or portion may be in this world, we have an inheritance before us incorruptible, undefiled, which fadeth not away; the believing prospect of which will effectually support the faithful under all the trials of life, and carry them triumphant through all the terrors of death to everlasting glory. Even so, Amen; come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!

THE BOOK
OF THE
PROPHET HOSEA.

HOSEA entered upon his sacred ministry about eight hundred years before the coming of Christ, above twenty years before the Olympiads, and more than forty years before the foundation of Rome. He is the first who has spoken of the destruction of Samaria; and he saw with his own eyes that melancholy event, which happened seven hundred and twenty years before the coming of the Messiah. Bishop Lowth observes, that Hosea is the most ancient of all the prophets, except perhaps Jonab. His style indicates antiquity; it is nervous, acute, concise, strongly marked with the graces of poetry, and retains the sententious brevity of the more ancient prophets whose writings are handed down to us. Though this doubtless was at first esteemed a peculiar elegance, yet, in the present devastations of the Hebrew language, it is productive of obscurity; and though the general subject of the prophet be plain enough, yet there is scarcely any other prophet so difficult and intricate. There is also another reason why his style may appear to us so involved. He prophesies in the reigns of four kings of Judah; that is to say,—however you calculate,—for a very long space of time. We have but a small volume, containing, as it seems, his principal prophesies; and all these connected together, without any date or argument; insomuch, that in the perusal of this prophet we seem sometimes like those who were employed in studying the scattered leaves of the Sybil. See Lowth's 21st Prelection.

C H A P. I.

Hosea, to shew God's judgment for spiritual whoredom, taketh Gomer, and hath by her Jezreel, Lo-rubamah, and Lommi. The restoration of Judah and Israel.

[Before Christ 786.]

THE word of the LORD that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the

days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

2 ¶ The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the

C H A P. I.

Ver. 1. The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri:] Hosea signifies a saviour, and Beeri—of a well. Calmet observes, that if Hosea prophesied in the reign of all these princes, he must have lived a very long time; for there are one hundred and twelve years from the beginning of Uzziah's to the end of Hezekiah's reign; add, if you please, twenty or twenty-five years, which might be the age of Hosea when he began to prophesy, and this will make a hundred and thirty-two or a hundred and thirty-seven. And if we were to take ten years from Uzziah, and as many from Hezekiah, during which Hosea might

not have prophesied, there will still remain a hundred and twelve or a hundred and seventeen years.

Ver. 2. Take unto thee a wife of whoredoms] That is, a woman, who, before her marriage, had lived an impure life, but who afterward should retire from all bad conversation, and whose children should be legitimate, notwithstanding that, by reason of the blemish which their mother had contracted by her former life, they were called *the children of whoredoms*. This prostitute woman, and the children to be born of her, were a figure, and a kind of real prophecy, which described the idolatry and infidelity of Samaria and the ten tribes, formerly the Lord's spouse, but afterwards become adulterous and corrupt. God

land hath committed great whoredom, *departing* from the LORD.

3 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived, and bare him a son.

4 And the LORD said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little *while*, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel.

5 And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.

6 ¶ And she conceived again, and bare a

daughter. And *God* said unto him, Call her name Lo-ruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away.

7 But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.

8 ¶ Now when she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son.

9 Then said *God*, Call his name Lo-ammi: for ye *are* not my people, and I will not be your *God*.

God gives these children the names of *Jezreel*, *Lorubamah*, or *without mercy*, and *Lo-ammi*, or *thou art no longer my people*; so shew, 1. That God was going to retaliate upon the house of Jehu, king of Israel, the sins which he had committed at *Jezreel*, when he came to the kingdom of the ten tribes. 2. That the Lord would treat his idolatrous and sinful people without mercy; and lastly, That he would reject them, and no more look upon them as his people. Many interpreters, offended at the irregularity of Hosea's marriage with a woman of a bad life, have thought this relation to be only a parable: that the prophet called the wife whom he had taken a *prostitute*, with a design only of awakening the attention of the Israelites; or that all this passed only in a vision, without the prophet's coming to the execution of it. But the whole sequel of Hosea's narration sufficiently shews, that this marriage was real, though figurative as to the things which it described, and which were to be afterwards performed. This is the opinion of St. Basil, Theodoret, St. Augustin, and many good interpreters. Dr. Pococke observes, "Seeing each opinion [that for the *literal* interpretation, and that for the *figurative*] is backed by great authority, and the maintainers thereof will not yield to one another's reasons; it must be still left to the considerate reader to use his own judgment; only with this caution, that he conceive nothing unworthy of God, or unworthy his holy prophet, nor draw from the words any unfavourable and unhandsome conclusions." See Pococke on Hosea. Besides, God was able to make ample compensation to the prophet in the course of eternity for any sufferings or reproaches which he might endure in consequence of this marriage.

Ver. 3. So he went] He said not, *This is a hard saying, who can bear it?* He does not reason, but comply: he does not dispute, but obey.

Ver. 4. Call his name Jezreel] For the honourable name of Israel is too good for this people. Call them therefore *Jezreel*, a people devoted to dispersion, and such as I will scatter unto the four winds of heaven, as the seedman scattereth his seed.

For yet a little while] And yet this *little while* was a *long while*, through God's gracious forbearance. Bad as this

people were, they should not perish without repeated warning.

Ver. 5. That I will break the bow of Israel, &c.] St. Jerome says, the Israelites were overthrown by the Assyrians in a pitched battle in the plain of Jezreel or Jezreel. But of any such battle we have no mention in history, sacred or profane. But Tiglath-pileser took several of the principal cities in that plain, in the reign of Pekah. And afterwards, in the reign of Hoshea, Samaria was taken by Shalmanazer after a siege of three years; and this put an end to the kingdom of the ten tribes; 2 Kings, xv. 29. and xvii. 5, 6. And the taking of these cities successively, and at last of the capital itself, was "a breaking of the bow of Israel," a demolition of the whole military strength of the kingdom, "in the valley of Jezreel," where all those cities were situated. For the breaking of the bow was a natural image for the overthrow of military strength in general, at a time when the bow and arrow was one of the principal weapons.

Although the valley of Jezreel is here to be understood literally of the tract of country so named, yet perhaps there is an indirect allusion to the mystical import of the name. This being the finest spot of the whole land of promise, the name, the vale of Jezreel, describes it as the property of the holy seed, by whom it is at last to be possessed. So that, in the very terms of the denunciation against the kingdom of Israel, an oblique promise is contained of the restoration of the converted Israelites. The Israel which possessed it, in the time of this prophecy, were not the rightful owners of the soil. It is part of the domain of the Jezreel, or Jezreel, for whom it is reserved.

Ver. 6. For I will no more have mercy, &c.] *For I will no more cherish with tenderness the house of Israel, inasmuch as to be perpetually forgiving them.* Bishop Horsley.

Ver. 7. But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah] This difference in the divine dispensation was owing to the enormous crimes of the Israelites, and to the singular piety of Hezekiah. Judah was saved in a miraculous manner from the sword of the Assyrians. It was *not* by bow, nor by sword, &c. but by the immediate and miraculous intervention of the Lord, who destroyed the Assyrian army in one night. See 2 Kings, xix. 35.

10 ¶ Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, *that* in the place where it was said unto them, *Ye are not my people, there* it shall be said unto them, *Ye are the sons*

of the living God.

11 Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel.

Ver. 10. Yet the number, &c.] Though God casts off the ten tribes, yet he will in due time supply their loss by bringing in great numbers of true Israelites into the church, not only of the Jews, but also of the Gentiles; and making them who before were strangers to the covenant of promise fellow-heirs with the Jews. The prophet plainly refers to the final restoration and admission of the Jews into the church of Christ. For these expressions are too magnificent to be understood of any thing but the final rescue of the Jews from the power of Antichrist in the latter ages, by the incarnate God destroying the enemy with the brightness of his coming; of which the destruction of Sennacherib's army in the days of Hezekiah might be a type, but it was nothing more. It may seem, perhaps, that the prophecy points at some deliverance peculiar to the house of Judah, in which the ten tribes will have no share; such as the overthrow of Sennacherib actually was; whereas the destruction of Antichrist will be an universal blessing. But, in the different treatment of the house of Judah and the house of Israel, we see the prophecy hitherto remarkably verified. After the excision of the kingdom of the ten tribes, Judah, though occasionally visited with severe judgments, continued, however, to be cherished with God's love, till they rejected our Lord. Then Judah became Lo-ammi, but still continues to be visibly an object of God's peculiar providence, preserved as a distinct race for gracious purposes of mercy. Perhaps in the last ages the converts of the house of Judah will be the principal objects of Antichrist's malice. Their deliverance may be first wrought, and through them the blessing may be extended to their brethren of the ten tribes, and ultimately to the whole world. This order of things the subsequent prophecy seems to point out.

And it shall come to pass, that in the place, &c.] That is, at Jerusalem, or at least in Judæa, where this prophecy was delivered, and where the execution of the sentence took place. There, in that very place, they, to whom it was said, *Ye are no people of mine, shall be called children of the living God.* This must relate to the natural Israel of the house of Judah; for to them it was said, "*Ye are no people of mine.*" And since they are to be acknowledged again as the children of the living God, in the same place where this sentence was pronounced and executed, the prophecy clearly promises their restoration to their own land.

Ver. 11. And appoint themselves one head] The Lord Jesus Christ shall become the chief and the king of his church, composed of Judah and Israel, of Jews and Gentiles. This is the primary intention of the prophecy; which, however, (as we observed above,) secondarily may refer to the restoration of the Jews from Babylon, and their re-union under one head. We have seen on the

fourth verse the meaning of the word *Jezreel*. There was a still farther prediction comprehended under it, which regarded the future and remote state of the Jews. The two Hebrew words זרע *zerah*, to *disperse*, and זרעו *zerang*, to *sow*, in order to *multiply* and *gather*, are in sound nearly the same; and either of them may compound the word *Israel* or *Jezreel*. As therefore the prophet declared the dispersion of Israel, when their *bow* or *strength* was *broken* in the valley of *Jezreel*, so here he comforts them with a promise, implied in another sense of the same name, of their *being gathered* from the captivity, and *increasing* like the *seed* of God. The latter words of this verse, *For great, &c.* are rendered in the Chaldee, *For great is the day of the gathering of Israel*: Jarchi, to render the allusion plainer, translates them, *Great is the day of gathering the seed of Israel*; which Kimchi explains thus: "Israel was typified in the child Jezreel, because God scattered them in his anger, as זרעו *zerang*—*seed*, among the Gentiles; and again, he called *Jezreel* the *seed of God*, because in the time of salvation they shall be sown in their own land." This is similar to the prophet's own explanation, chap. ii. 22, 23. See Chandler's Defence, and Houbigant.

And they shall come up out of the land] *And come up from the earth.* That is, from all parts of the earth to Jerusalem. Jerusalem being situated upon an eminence, and in the heart of a mountainous region, which rose greatly above the general level of the country to a great distance on all sides, the sacred writers always speak of persons going to Jerusalem, as going up.

Great shall be the day of Jezreel] Great and happy shall be the day, when the holy seed of both branches of the natural Israel shall be publicly acknowledged of their God; united under one head, their king Messiah; and restored to the possession of the promised land, and to a situation of high pre-eminence among the kingdoms of the earth. Bishop Horley.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The prophet opens his book with an account of his name and parentage. He was called *Hosea*, the same as Jesus or Joshua, a *Saviour*, the great business of his ministry being to promote the salvation of his people. His father's name is mentioned; but of what tribe or place he was is not said.

He prophesied during the reigns of four kings of Judah, and their cotemporaries who ruled in Israel, though but one of them is mentioned. Perhaps their lives were so bad, that their very names were odious.

2dly, The first revelation of God's will to Hosea, was a fearful threatening against a rebellious people, under the figure of a man taking a *wife of unbelief*. In the names of the children born of this marriage, the prophet is commissioned

C H A P. II.

The idolatry of the people : God's judgments against them : his promises of reconciliation with them.

[Before Christ 786.]

SA Y ye unto your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ruhamah.

2 Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts;

3 Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in

missioned to foretel the approaching ruin of that devoted people.

1. In the name of the first son, who is called Jezreel, God shews Jeroboam the destruction determined against his family, and the cause of it. *Jezreel* signifies *the seed of God, or scattered of God*; and this is explained, *for yet a little while, in a few years, under his son Jeconiah, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu*; the blood of Ahab, and his sons and relations, which Jehu shed; for though the action was right, and God commended it, 2 Kings, x. 30. yet the temper with which Jehu did it was evil, intending not God's glory, but the gratification of his own pride, ambition, and cruelty, as afterwards evidently appeared; for though he pretended zeal for God when he seized the throne, he still kept the calves in Dan and Bethel. Thus many of the good works of pride and self-righteousness become evil from the temper with which they are done, and bring down a curse instead of a blessing. *And I will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel, in the family of Jehu, as was soon fulfilled, 2 Kings, xv. 8—10.* Or this may relate to the destruction of the ten tribes by Salmaneser, 2 Kings, xvii. 6—23. *And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel*; which may refer to Menahem's slaughter of Shallum, 2 Kings, xv. 14—16. or to some battle fought there with Salmaneser, before he subdued the country, 2 Kings, xvii. 6. See the Annotations. *Note*; They who depart from God weaken their own arms; and sin brings certain ruin in its train.

2. In the name of the second child, Lo-ruhamah, God foretels his entire rejection of the whole nation. The word signifies *without mercy*; intimating, as the prophet from God explains it, that God would have no more mercy on the Israelites, but would *utterly take them away*, as was done by the king of Assyria, 2 Kings, xvii. Woe to the sinner with whom God's mercies are at an end!

3. A promise of mercy is made to the house of Judah, which had preserved the true worship of God. *I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God*, not by any human power or weapons; which may refer to the deliverance of the Jews from Sennacherib's army, 2 Kings, xix. 35. or rather to the greater salvation which the Lord Jesus should accomplish, subduing all the spiritual foes of his faithful people, and by his own arm making them more than conquerors. *Note*; (1.) All our salvation comes not from any merit in us, but the mere mercy of our God. (2.) They who cleave to God as their God, shall find that he will own them in the day of trouble, and interpose for their rescue.

3dly, The decree gone forth against this wicked nation

is confirmed in the name of a son, the third child, called Lo-ammi, after Lo-ruhamah was *weaned*; which may signify the patience of God for a while bearing with them; or that first captivity, when many of Gilead and Galilee were carried away by Tiglath-pileser, 2 Kings, xv. 29.

1. God rejects Israel from being his people, as the name *Lo-ammi* signifies, *Ye are no longer my people*; have cast off my government and worship: *and I will not be your God, to bless, protect, and save you.* *Note*; (1.) They who revolt from God, are justly rejected by him. (2.) Many claim a relation to God in name, whose works deny him, and whom he will therefore disown.

2. In wrath God remembers mercy; and a gracious promise is made of their restoration. He that wounds, is willing to heal. *Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered*; which prophecy, whatever primary respect it might have to the return of the Israelites from their captivity with their brethren; or whatever ground of comfort it might afford to the pious captives there; yet we are assured, Rom. ix. 24—26. was to have its glorious accomplishment when Jews and Gentiles should be converted to the faith of Christ; as was eminently the case, when, by the preaching of the gospel at the first, multitudes were added to the church; and daily we observe the innumerable host increasing, till the fulness of the Gentiles shall be come in at the last day, and *so all Israel shall be saved.* *And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God*; adopted into the family, and admitted to all the great and distinguished privileges of the children of God. *Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together*; which some interpret of the union of these divided kingdoms, on their return from Babylon; but it rather respects the times of the gospel, when Galileans, Samaritans, and Jews, converted by the preaching of Christ and his apostles, were joined in one Christian church, and the Gentiles afterwards incorporated therein. But particular respect is had to the times when the Jews shall be collected from their present dispersion, and be universally-turned to the Lord, *and appoint themselves one head, the Divine Messiah, to whom they shall be gathered at the last, willingly submitting themselves to his blessed government: and they shall come up out of the land, or the earth, collected from all parts of it; or as experiencing a kind of resurrection from the state of misery, like death, in which they lay, for great shall be the day of Jezreel*; after all the afflictions that they have endured, their latter end shall be full of glory. *Note*; (1.) Every believer is distinguished with the eminent dignity of being a child of the living God; and,

the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst.

4 And I will not have mercy upon her children; for they *be* the children of whoredoms.

5 For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give *me* my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.

6 Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.

7 And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find *them*: then shall she say, I will go, and return to my first husband; for then *was it* better with me than now.

8 For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, *which* they prepared for Baal.

9 Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax *given* to cover her nakedness.

10 And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand.

11 I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast-days, her new-moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.

12 And I will destroy her vines and her fig-trees, whereof she hath said, *These are* my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.

13 And I will visit upon her the days of

and, however he may be despised of men, is glorious in the eyes of the Most High and Most Holy, and, persevering in faith and love and holy obedience, shall be acknowledged by him in the last great day. (2.) The people of God have Christ for their living head, deriving from him all vital influence; yielding themselves up to him, to be directed and governed; and through him maintaining mutual communion with each other, being all *one* in Christ Jesus. (3.) They who have Christ for their head, *must come up from the earth*, and set their affections on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.

CHAP. II.

Ver. 1. Say ye, &c.] Several interpreters join this verse with the foregoing chapter. "When the great day of Jezreel, or the restoration of the Jews, shall be accomplished, you may alter your manner of speaking to those of your brethren and sisters whom I had before disavowed, and you may call them *עמי Ammi*, or *my people*; and *רחמה Rubamah*, or *she that hath obtained mercy*. The prophet alludes to the 6th and 9th verses of the preceding chapter. See Rom. ix. 25. and Poccocke.

Ver. 2. Pléad, &c.] These words are directed to those pious persons who still remained among the ten tribes, and who were required to reprove, and use their best endeavours to reform that general corruption which the nation had contracted by its idolatry. *In the day that she was born, &c.*, ver. 3., alludes to the situation of the Hebrews in Egypt, plunged in idolatry, oppressed with cruel servitude, and almost deprived of hope. See Ezek. xvi. 5, 6.

Ver. 3. And make her as a wilderness] Hebrew. *And lay*

her waste like a wilderness. It may seem harsh to say of a woman, that she shall be laid waste like a wilderness, and reduced to the condition of a parched land. But it is to be observed, that the allegorical style makes an intercommunity of attributes between the type and the thing typified. So that when a woman is the image of a country, or of a church, that may be said of the woman which, in unfigured speech, might be said of the country, or the church, which she represents. The country might literally be made a waste wilderness, by unfruitful seasons, by the devastations of war, or of noxious vermin; a church is made a wilderness and a parched land, when the living waters of the Spirit are withheld.

Ver. 7. I will go, and return, &c.] After finding that her attachment to idols and idolatrous nations will not avail her, but rather plunge her into misfortunes, she will through divine grace be brought to a sense of her duty, and of the happiness that she enjoyed, while cleaving stedfastly to her God. See Isai. liv. 5. Jer. iii. 1. xlv. 17, &c. Ezek. xvi. and xviii.

Ver. 11. I will also cause, &c.] "There shall be no more numerous and magnificent assemblies in the temples of Jerusalem, to celebrate the solemn festivals of the Lord." These threats were literally executed during the time of the Babylonish captivity. See Calmet.

Ver. 13. I will visit, &c.] "I will punish her for all the idolatries that she hath committed, from the days of Jeroboam, who set up the worship of false gods." Days being taken for the *sins*, or so as to include the sins committed in them, and *בעלים Baalim* being the plural number of *בעל Baal*, denotes either a variety of false gods, called by that name, or a variety of images dedicated to Baal.

Ver.

Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her ear-rings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the LORD.

14 ¶ Therefore behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.

15 And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.

16 And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali.

17 For I will take away the names of Baalim

out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.

18 And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.

19 And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies.

20 I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the LORD.

21 And it shall come to pass in that day,

Ver. 14. Therefore behold, I will allure her] Nevertheless, I will allure her, after I have brought her into the wilderness, [to Babylon], &c. "After having treated her with rigour, and having convinced her of her deviations; I will restore her to my favour and regard." The valley of Achor was near Jericho. It was remarkable for its fertility; and the meaning is, that as, at the first entrance of the Israelites into Canaan, their taking possession of the fruitful valley of Achor gave them encouragement to hope that they should become masters of the whole land flowing with milk and honey; so the same auspicious token of the divine favour should accompany them at their return into their own country. See Itai. lxx. 10. But the words especially refer to the times of the gospel; as if Jehovah had said, Speak what shall touch her heart in her outcast state in the wilderness of the Gentile world, by the proffers of mercy in the Gospel. "For the doctrine of the Gospel," says Luther upon this place, "is the true soothing speech with which the minds of men are taken. For it terrifies not the soul, like the Law, with severe denunciations of punishment; but, although it reproves sin, it declares that God is ready to pardon sinners for the sake of his son, and holds forth the sacrifice of the Son of God, that the souls of sinners may be assured that satisfaction has been made by that to God."

Ver. 15. Thence] The English word thence renders either from that place, or from that time, or in consequence of those things; and the original word is used in all these various senses. No one of these senses would be inapplicable in this place; but the last seems the most significant. God declares, that the calamities of the dispersion, together with the soothing intimations of the Gospel, by bringing the Jewish race to a right mind, will be the means of reintituting them in that wealth and prosperity, which God will provide for them in their own land.

Ver. 16. Thou shalt call me Ishi] Houbigant renders this, Thou shalt call me, My husband: Thou shalt no more call me, My lord or master. "Because thou shalt love me, and

"shalt serve me through affection, and not through fear."

Ver. 17. They shall no more be remembered by their name] It is in vain to look for a purity of religious worship, answerable to this prophecy, among the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity. This part of the prophecy, with all the rest, will receive its accomplishment in the converted race in the latter days. It is said indeed, that, after the return from Babylon, the Jews scrupulously avoided idolatry, and have continued untainted with it to this day. But generally as this is asserted by all commentators, one after another, it is not true. Among the restored Jews there was indeed no public idolatry, patronized by the government, as there had been in times before the captivity, particularly in the reign of Ahaz. But from the time of Antiochus Epiphanes to the last moments of the Jewish polity, there was a numerous and powerful faction, which in every thing affected the Greek manners; and this Hellenizing party were idolaters to a man. The Jews of the present times, as far as we are acquainted with them, seem indeed to be free from the charge of idolatry, properly so called. But of the present state of the ten tribes we have no certain knowledge; without which we cannot take upon us either to accuse or to acquit them.

Ver. 18. A covenant] This covenant with the beasts of the field, the fowls of heaven, and the reptiles of the earth, is the final conversion of the most ignorant and vicious of the Heathen to the true faith. The effect of which must be, that they will all live in peace and friendship with the re-established nation of the Jews.

Ver. 20. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness] By faith. Houbigant. By that virtue which is the foundation of all religion, and of all other virtues. The perfect accomplishment of this prophecy can belong only to the Christian church.

Ver. 21, 22. I will hear, &c.] I will answer, saith the Lord, I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the [wants of the] earth. Ver. 22. And the earth shall favour the

I will hear, saith the LORD, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth;

22 And the earth shall hear the corn, and

the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel.

23 And I will sow her unto me in the

the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel. This elegant gradation of the prophet admirably denotes the concert, the harmony, the intelligence, which shall be between all the parts of the universe. They shall no more see the *heaven of iron, and of brass*, withholding its *dew*, and its *rain*; nor the earth, burnt up by the sun, unable to nourish the plants; nor the fruits denied the succour of the earth, nor men deprived of their necessary aliments. This alludes to the spiritual blessings of the Christian church in general, and to the glorious privileges, spiritual and temporal, of the Millennium in particular.

Ver. 23. And I will sow her unto me in the earth] The myriads of the natural Israel, converted by the preaching of the apostles, were the first seed of the Christian church. And there is reason to believe, that the restoration of the converted Jews will be the occasion and means of a prodigious influx of new converts from the Gentiles in the latter ages. Rom. xi. 12 and 15. Bishop Horsley.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The first words of this chapter may be either taken in connection with the latter part of the preceding, as speaking comfort to the people of God, those faithful ones, who, having chosen Christ for their head, are restored to God's favour, acknowledged by him, as *Ammi, my people, and Rubamah, having obtained mercy*; or they have respect to those Jewish converts, who in the times of the gospel being turned to Christ Jesus, and become the children of God by faith in him, are exhorted to rebuke, and expostulate, with their mother, the Jewish church, for her rejection of the true Messiah.

1. God threatens utterly to separate himself from her. *She is not my wife*; has behaved unworthy of that relation: *the bath played the harlot*; has broken the marriage-covenant, casting off all obedience, and committing spiritual adultery against the Lord. *She that conceived them hath done shamefully*; serving dumb idols, and committing idolatry with stocks and stones: or, *she hath made ashamed*; has been a scandal to her husband and her family; and therefore he will no more own her: *neither am I her husband*, to protect, cherish, or provide for her: he thrusts her out, gives her a divorce, and separates her from all the honour and comfort of the relation in which she stood. *Note*; (1.) They who treacherously depart from God will provoke him to depart from them: and woe to the soul that is in such a case! (2.) Sin is not the only abominable thing that God hates, but the *shameful* thing which will sooner or later cover the sinner with everlasting confusion and contempt.

2. He invites her to repent and return. Though offended, he was not inexorable; *let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts*: as these were the occasion of the fatal separation between God and them, when the cause was removed, the effect would cease. *Note*; (1.) God delighteth not in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should return

and live. (2.) They who would truly return to God must not only put away the grosser acts of sin, but seek to root out of their bosoms the love of it, that they may be pure within.

3. The consequences of her impenitence, if persisted in, would be fatal. God waits upon sinners long; but if they will not turn, he whets his sword as he here threatens; *lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born*; alluding to the wretched state of a new-born infant. So destitute and miserable were they when first God took them for his people in Egypt, Ezek. xvi. 4. and to a like state of wretchedness should they be reduced: *and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst*; he will bring them into circumstances as deplorable as those of their fathers in the wilderness, or utterly destroy and ruin their nation, as the carcases of those who fell in that barren land. *And I will not have mercy upon her children*, but the curse shall fatally rest upon them, as it does to this day for the rejection of the Messiah; *for they be the children of whoredoms*, imitating the ill example of their parents, and therefore sharing their punishment.

4. He upbraids her ingratitude and folly. *She played the harlot*; committing idolatry, that shameful thing; *for she said, I will go after my lovers, her idols, on which she deoted, and to whom she ascribed all the good things that she enjoyed, that give me my bread, &c.*; robbing God of the glory of his gifts, and giving this honour unto stocks and stones, or the hosts of heaven, Jer. xlv. 17, 18. *Note*; (1.) The folly, as well as baseness of sin, is prodigious. (2.) They who make their belly their God, and the delights of sense their happiness, are in the broad way of ruin. (3.) Worldly prosperity and abundance have been the fatal snare by which many an immortal soul has been ruined.

2dly, They who go on obstinately in their evil ways, may assuredly expect that vengeance, though slow, will surely overtake them. Thus God threatens the Israelites:

1. He will compass them with troubles, out of which they shall see no way to escape; *I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths*; as when they were besieged, however much they desired it, they could neither go to seek help from their allies, nor visit their idols at Dan and Bethel. Or else this implies, that all their endeavours to extricate themselves from their troubles would but the more involve and torment them, and their pretended friends prove to them no better than a broken reed. *Note*; (1.) They who depart from God will find the curse pursue them as close as their shadow; and the longer they persist in these froward ways, the more misery they shall find in them. (2.) When God arrests the sinner by the afflictions of his providence, it is to convince him of the evil of his pursuits, and to turn him back from ruin.

2. These troubles will have a blessed effect, on many of them

earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.

them at least; then shall she say, when every other hope proves desperate, I will go and return to my first husband, the Lord God of Israel, for then was it better with me than now.

Note; (1.) It is well if despair of creature-comforts and confidences drives the sinner to God; and even then he will not cast him out. (2.) Whoever has once tasted the blessedness of God's service, and has unfaithfully departed from it, will find by the longest experience, that none of the pleasures of sin are to be compared with a sense of God's love, and the testimony of a good conscience. (3.) Returning backsliders, who do their first works, shall be restored again to their first love.

3. Because they had abused the plenty that God had given them, unless they repented thus and returned to him, he threatens them with famine, poverty, and nakedness. More stupid than the ox that knows his owner, they did not acknowledge God the author of the mercies so liberally bestowed on them, but dishonoured him by lavishing their riches on their hated idols. Most justly, therefore, he threatens to resume the gifts which they thus abused, and make them know, by the miseries that he will inflict, the wickedness and ingratitude of their conduct. *Note;* They who profusely spend their substance in pride, luxury, gaming, and the service of divers lusts and pleasures, are as criminal as if they prepared it for Baal.

[1.] God will take from them their corn and wine, and make them know want and hunger. Their harvest shall become a heap of chaff, and their vintage disappoint their expectations. And those vines and fig-trees shall be destroyed by their invaders, or by inclement seasons, which they regarded as the gifts of their idols. He calls them my corn, my wine, for we are but stewards, the property is still in him; by whatever title we hold our creature-comforts, to him we must be accountable for them. To abuse them is the sure way to provoke God to deprive us of them in time; or worse, to punish us for our unfaithfulness in eternity.

[2.] He will strip them naked to their shame. Now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, when scattered among the nations, who shall treat them with insult and contempt, as an infamous strumpet; and none shall deliver her out of mine hand; neither the idols, nor the allies in whom they trusted. *Note;* None can save that soul which God has at last determined to destroy.

[3.] God will turn her mirth into mourning. Though they had forsaken the temple at Jerusalem, they still kept up the days of feasting, not in honour of God, but of their calves, and turned these sacred seasons into times of carnal merriment and riot, utterly perverting the holy design of their institution. But now, when famine had cut off all their provisions, or their victorious enemies had ravaged their country, and led them captive into a strange land, these solemnities must cease of course, and they be sunk in misery and mourning. *Note;* (1.) Holy days and seasons, by unholy men perverted, are often turned into an occasion of more than ordinary drunkenness, lewdness,

and riot. (2.) When we abuse God's institutions, it is just with him to rob those of the form, who have lost the power of godliness.

4. All this misery coming upon them, was owing to their idolatry and apostasy from God. I will visit upon her the days of Baalim; punishing them for their long course of idolatry from the days of the Judges, ever since which they had burnt incense to one deity or another, and decked themselves in their best attire on their holy days, to do honour to these dunghill gods; and forgot me, saith the Lord; which is the origin and aggravation of all their other sins. *Note;* Forgetfulness of God is at the bottom of all our sins, and the chief of them.

3dly, The threatenings in the foregoing verses were not more tremendous, than the promises which follow them are reviving. When we might have expected, from the conclusion of the last verse, to have heard the most fearful curses reiterated, as the just vengeance of their idolatry and forgetfulness of God.—Instead of this, *Therefore,* says God, I will allure her; which intimates his almost boundless patience, determined to try every method before he abandoned them to ruin.

1. God will revive and comfort them, that is to say, every returning penitent among them. The allusion is to the bringing them out of Egypt, through the wilderness, into the land flowing with milk and honey, which they entered through the valley of Achor. And with like mercy will he again visit them; either by his Gospel inviting them into the church of the Redeemer at the first; or finally by recovering them from their present dispersion, and converting every returning sinner among them to the faith of Christ in the last day. I will allure her with the kindest words of tender affection, by the great and gracious promises of his word, and the sweetly drawing influences of his Spirit; and bring her into the wilderness; either by the afflictive dispensations of his providences humbling their souls, or convincing them of their misery and guilt, in order to lead them more earnestly to seek the riches of his grace; and speak comfortably unto her, encouraging the dejected hearts of his poor penitent people, burdened with guilt and heavy-laden with trouble, and shewing them in Christ Jesus, the peace, pardon, and plenteous redemption, which miserable sinners so exceedingly need, and which are to them tidings of great joy; and I will give her her vineyards from thence; either the abundance of temporal blessings which they had lost, or rather the graces and consolations of his Spirit, which are more refreshing than wine to the weary; and the valley of Achor, where Achan was stoned, for a door of hope, this being their first entrance into the promised land, and the pledge of their possessing the rest. Thus, when God converts the souls of returning penitents to himself, the accursed thing sin is put away, a door of hope is opened to them after their darkness and distress, and, in the present grace that they receive, they have the pledge of that eternal glory which is prepared for all the faithful: and she shall sing there

C H A P. III.

By the expiation of an adulteress, is shewed the desolation of Israel before their restoration.

[Before Christ 786.]

THEN said the LORD unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet

an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine.

2 So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley:

there as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up out of Egypt, when they beheld the Egyptians dead on the sea-shore; so shall the people of God rejoice in the complete victory of their Redeemer, and triumph in the God of their salvation; happy in the present possession of his love, and the animating prospect of eternal blessedness. Note; (1.) Nothing has so powerful an effect upon the sinner's conscience as the alluring promises of Gospel grace. (2.) A sinner brought into the wilderness of conviction is ready to fear that destruction is before him; but the gate of life lies in this valley of the shadow of death.

2. God will cleanse them thus returning from all their idols. They shall not only no more worship Baal, but not even take his name in their lips. *And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, when the Jews shall be thus turned to him, thou shalt call me Ishi, my husband, by faith embracing the Lord Jesus as the blessed Bridegroom of their souls; and shalt call me no more Baali, which signifies my husband also, or my Lord; but was a name which had been so much abused in worshipping their idols, that the very mention of it should be abhorred, and the memory of it stamped with oblivion; for I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name, idolatry of every kind being utterly abolished; as will be fully accomplished in the latter day, when every idol, papal as well as pagan, shall fall for ever. Note; (1.) The endearing relation which God is pleased to assume, as the husband of his believing people, should engage our warmest affection and most unshaken fidelity. (2.) It is a sure symptom that we possess the favour of God, when we are separated through grace from all our beloved idols and lusts. (3.) When a thing, innocent in itself, is abused to the purposes of superstition and idolatry, it should thenceforth be avoided.*

3. God will be their protector from every foe, whether the savages of the forest, or the more dangerous savages, wicked men, or fiends of darkness. The beasts of the earth, as bound by a covenant, shall no more hurt or destroy God's believing people; and all their brutal persecutors, with the old lion their ruler, shall be for ever disabled from injuring them. Then wars shall cease in all the earth, and, quiet from fear of evil, they shall lie down safely, under the guardian care of their almighty Lord and Saviour. *Note; (1.) When God is our friend, who can harm us? (2.) Whether we lie down on beds of sleep, or in the dust of death, we may, if faithful, alike serene, quietly repose on Jesus, and be assured that under his wings we must be safe.*

4. God will anew take them into a covenant of marriage, notwithstanding their former divorce. *I will betroth thee unto me for ever; which may refer to the Jews in particular, who at last shall be brought again into the visible*

church of Christ; or may be applied to every particular believer, whether Jew or Gentile, who believes in Christ, and perseveringly cleaves to him. *Yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, dealing with them in the most assured sincerity; and in judgment, in such a way as is most perfectly consistent with his justice, though they deserve his wrath instead of his love; and in loving-kindness, to share his warmest regard; and in mercies, bestowing on them every blessing that a sinful soul can need; and this purely flowing not from any merit in them, but from his undeserved favour; and in faithfulness, engaging to fulfil every promise of the covenant to them on his part; and thou shalt know the Lord, his excellence, glory, and love. Blessed and happy is the soul that is in such a case!*

5. God will enrich them with the blessings of the basket and the store; or rather the better spiritual blessings of grace are represented by the corn and wine. They had before been threatened with the destruction of their worldly comforts; but now, being restored to God's favour, they shall regain the creature-good that they had forfeited; and this is represented by a beautiful figure, wherein the prayers of the whole creation, which groans under the curse of sin, are represented as ascending into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. *I will hear the heavens, or answer their cry, desiring permission to drop down the dew, without which they are as brals over the sinner's head; and the heavens shall hear the earth, gasping for want of rain; and the earth shall bear the corn, and the wine, and the oil, withering for drought; and they shall bear Jezreel, furnishing an abundant supply for the famished people. Thus does the dew of heavenly influences descend on the thirsty soul; and under the dispensation of the word and ordinances of Christ, such quickening, comforting, and strengthening grace is dispensed, that God's believing people grow up, and bring forth the abundant fruits of righteousness and true holiness.*

6. God will greatly increase the number of his Israel. *I will sow her unto me in the earth; either the dispersed Israelites, who had been scattered in all lands, and in their days of captivity seemed buried as seed beneath the clods of the valley, but shall at last spring up more numerous than ever; or, by the preaching of the word of Gospel grace, that divine seed should be sown, whence a glorious harvest should be gathered of Israelites indeed, of true believers, the seed of God as the word Jezreel signifies.*

7. God will reverse the sentence pronounced upon them, and change their ominous names. *They shall no more be called Lo-ammi and Lo-rubamah; for I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy, both Jews and Gentiles, to whom the apostle expressly applies this promise, Rom. ix. 25. and I will say to them which were not my people, the Gentiles before the Gospel came unto them, and the Jews who for a while are cut off from their relation to God*

3 And I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee.

4 For the children of Israel shall abide many

days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim:

5 Afterward shall the children of Israel re-

God till the fulness of the Gentiles is come in, *Thou art my people*, restored and recovered, through Jesus Christ, to his love and protection; and they shall say, *Thou art my God*, enabled by faith to embrace the promises, and to approve their fidelity to him. *Note*; (1.) The salvation of the sinner is an act of God's infinite mercy, and not of any merit of ours. (2.) None are so bad as to be beyond the reach of this mercy while on this side eternity, and therefore never to be despaired of. (3.) The greatest of all mercies is, to have God for our own God; every possible blessing is comprehended in that relation.

CH A P. III.

Ver. 1. Beloved of her friend, &c.] Given to wickedness and an adulteress. A different woman is here meant from that which he had before espoused. The first denoted the infidelity of the kingdom of Israel, and God's divorce of them. He abandoned them to the enemy, and permitted them to be carried into captivity. This marks out the state of this spouse, divorced, but not continuing in the practice of idolatry. This was the disposition of the Jews during the Babylonish captivity; snatched, as it were, by force, from the objects of their impure love, they continued in their exile, almost equally separated from their God and their idols: but with this difference, that their God did in some sense retain towards them as a nation sentiments of affection, expecting on their part true repentance. It has generally been thought, that the ancient idolaters used to offer *flaggons of wine* to the gods, and that the prophet alludes to this at the end of the verse. The words seem in general to express their leaving the service of God, and making themselves like idolatrous people, in following after bodily delights and pleasures; as drunkenness, gluttony, and the like, which the service of those idols did not only permit, but require. See Calmet, and Pococke.

Ver. 3. Thou shalt abide, &c.] By these conditions which the prophet makes with the woman whom he was to take, that she should humble herself, and not run about after others, as formerly, but remain sequestered and solitary, and that for many days, &c. must be meant, with respect to Israel, that God, though he separate himself for a long time from them, and humble them by reducing them to a low condition, and restraining them from their idolatry and former luxury; yet will not so utterly reject them, but that he will in due time, upon their repentance, again receive them. *So will I also be for thee*: that is, though he thus require her to sit solitary and sequestered, yet his care shall not be withdrawn from her. He will all the while bear a kindness and respect to her, that he may at length, upon her true contrition, enlarge her. See Pococke.

Ver. 4, 5. For the children of Israel shall abide, &c.] This threatening was fulfilled upon the ten tribes, when they were carried captive by Salmaneser; but was fulfilled in a

remarkable manner upon the whole nation at the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus; for from that time they have had neither republic nor civil government of their own, but live every where like so many exiles. They have had neither priests nor sacrifices, their temple being destroyed, where only they were permitted to offer sacrifices. It is added in the next verse, that, touched with a true remorse for their former errors, especially that of rejecting the Messiah, and desirous of being instructed in the knowledge of truth, Israel should return, and seek the Lord, and David their king; that is to say, the Messiah, by the confession of the Chaldee itself. And indeed there can be no doubt that *Jesus Christ* is the grand literal object of this prophecy; and that it also refers to the final restoration of the Jews. See Jer. xxiii. 5.

Ver. 4. Without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim.] After much consideration of the passage, and of much that has been written upon it by expositors, I rest in the opinion strenuously maintained by the learned Pococke, in which he agrees with many that went before him, and has the concurrence of many that came after, Luther, Calvin, Vatablus, Drusius, Livelye, Houbigant, and Archbishop Newcome, with many others of inferior note; I rest, I say, after much consideration, in the opinion, that *image*, (or rather *statue*,) *ephod*, and *teraphim*, are mentioned as principal implements of idolatrous rites. And the sum of this fourth verse is this; that for many ages the Jews would not be their own masters; would be deprived of the exercise of their own religion, in its most essential parts; not embracing the Christian, they would have no share in the true service, and yet would be restrained from idolatry, to which their forefathers had been so prone. But as the prophecy contained in this verse is peculiarly descriptive of the state of the Jewish nation since their dispersion by the Romans, and as interpreters differ much in their explanations of the latter part of ver. 4. I shall not perhaps do justice to my critical readers, if I withhold from them a full disquisition of the passage.

An *ephod* seems to have been a garment, like a cloak without sleeves, covering the body as low as the pit of the stomach before, and as low as the shoulder-blades behind. It seems to have taken its name from the straitness of its collar, and the manner in which it was fastened about the person. The ephod of the high-priest was of costly materials, and the richest embroidery; and it made a very principal part of his robes of office. But something of a similar shape, and of the same name, but made of plain linen, was worn by the inferior priests, see 1 Sam. xlii. 18, and occasionally at least by other persons, 1 Sam. ii. 18. But it appears also, that idolaters, at least the idolatrous Israelites, sometimes dressed up the images of the deities they worshipped, in a gorgeous ephod, resembling that of the high-priest, and made perhaps in imitation of it. And this was so principal, and so sacred a part of the idol's robes,

turn, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king: and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.

robes, that the word was sometimes used as a name for the idol itself. Thus certainly we must understand Gideon's ephod; when it is said, "that he set it up, יצ" " *iatseg*, in his own city, in Ophrah, and that all Israel "went a-whoring after it; which thing became a snare "unto Gideon and his house," Judg. viii. 27. This ephod was made, according to the sacred historian, of the spoils of the slaughtered Midianites, the purple robes of their kings, the gold of their ear-rings, and other ornaments. Inasmuch that, in the costliness of the materials, it much resembled the sacred ephod of the high-priest. But when it is said, that it "was set up in Ophrah, and that all "Israel went a-whoring after it," the robe is certainly put for an image, which was adorned with it, and drew so much admiration, that it became an object of idolatrous adoration. The ephod, therefore, appears to have been a principal ornament both of the true and of the false worship; and when the word is used, in the figurative language of prophecy, as it is in this passage, to express in general the external grandeur of public institutions; it is in itself of ambiguous import, and its connexions in the context must determine, whether it refers to the approved forms of a pure service, or to idolatry. That it refers to the latter in the text, is evident from the connection with statues or images mentioned next before, and teraphim next after the ephod; for both these will be found to be produced here, as principal articles of the furniture of idolatry.

We find the *teraphim* among some of the worshippers of Jehovah in the patriarchal ages, and among heathen idolaters afterwards; for Laban, who was a worshipper of Jehovah, had his teraphim, (Gen. xxxi. 19.) and Nebuchadnezzar had his, Ezek. xxi. 21. They seem to have been images, made in some general resemblance of the person of a man, 1 Sam. xix. 13, 16. The teraphim of the heathen idolaters were probably imitations of those of the worshippers of Jehovah mentioned above; for the ancient idolatry was in every thing a mimicry and misapplication of the patriarchal symbols. The teraphim of idolaters were magical images, used for the purposes of divination, as appears in particular from Ezekiel in the place quoted. But the patriarchal teraphim were probably emblematical figures, like the cherubim; like those I mean of the simpler sort, which were seen in the ornaments of the more open parts of the tabernacle, and of the temple. The teraphim I take to have been figures of the like mystic import; but of materials less costly, of coarser work, and certainly upon a smaller scale. But it is certain that the use of them was absolutely forbidden to God's people; and, long before the time of the prophet Hosea, they were considered as a part of the worst rubbish of idolatry, which it became the duty of the pious to destroy. When the prophet Samuel would represent to Saul the enormity of his crime, in not having executed the command of God, he could find nothing worse with which he could compare it, than the sin of witchcraft and teraphim, 1 Sam. xv. 23. The teraphim are numbered among the abominations in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, which Josiah put away, 2 Kings, xxiii. 24. From all this I cannot but con-

clude, that the teraphim, in the text of Hosea, are to be understood of nothing but implements of idolatrous rites, images consecrated to the purposes of magic and divination.

I come now to the *image* or *statue*, the first word of the three, which will require no long discussion. This, like the teraphim, had been in use among many of the worshippers of Jehovah in early ages; but was absolutely prohibited by Moses. A statue, מצבה *matsebah*, signifies any thing, more especially of stone, erected or set up as a monument or memorial; but particularly as a religious monument. The heathen idolaters, instead of simple pillars, set up images carved in the human, or other form, to represent the object of their worship. This abuse was certainly ancient, and gave occasion to the strict prohibition of the Mosaic law, "Ye shall make you no idols, nor "graven image; neither rear you up מצבה *matsebah*, a "standing image [statue, or pillar,]" Lev. xxvi. 1. "After this prohibition," says Dr. Pococke, "we cannot look "on any such used in religious worship, but as a part, and "so a sign, of the falseness of that worship. And so here "therefore [in this text of Hosea] to say, the children of "Israel shall be without such, is as much as to say, that "they shall not have free exercise of their former ways "of idolatry."

If I may offer a conjecture concerning the difference between these idolatrous statues and the teraphim, I would say, that the statues were of large dimensions, set up in public, as objects of popular adoration: the teraphim were of a smaller size, and for different purposes, kept in the most sacred recesses of temples, or consecrated chapels, for magical rites, and rarely, if ever, exposed to public view.

Thus, since it appears, that both the statue and the teraphim of Hosea were implements of idolatry, no doubt can remain, that the ephod, which is mentioned between the two, is to be understood of the idolatrous ephod, not of that which belonged to the holy vestments of the high-priest. As it is put between the statue and the teraphim, it may seem, that it may be connected with either: connected with the statue, it will denote the robe with which the idol was clothed: connected with the teraphim, the ephod of the priest of the teraphim. And in this connection (to which indeed the structure of the sentence in the original seems to point in preference) I would choose to take it. For thus we shall have the idolatry described, by the three principal features in its external appearance; the statue, the public object of popular adoration; the teraphim, the images of the more secret rites of incantation; and the forcerer, or hierophant, conducting the ceremonies, and propounding to the consulters of the oracle the answers that he pretended to receive, represented by the ephod, the most remarkable of his robes of office. See Bishop Horley.

Let us now just notice how exactly this prophecy of Hosea has been accomplished ever since the dispersion of the Jews by the Romans. They have had no king or prince of their own, nor any sacrifice: and yet they have kept themselves free from all idolatrous rites. But alas! they have rejected their own Messiah—they are without Christ!

REFLEC-

CHAP. IV.

God's judgments against the sins of the people, and of the priests, and against their idolatry. Judah is exhorted to take warning by Israel's calamity.

[Before Christ 870.]

HEAR the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because *there is* no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The prophet still speaks of himself under the character of a man who hath betrothed a woman and loved her, though an adulteress, and her affections placed upon another; and this in order to reproach the baseness and ingratitude of the people of Israel, who had thus treacherously departed from God.

1. The prophet represents their baseness and ingratitude, and God's amazing forbearance towards them, notwithstanding they had played the harlot and gone after idols, looking to them for help and comfort, delighting in drunkenness and intemperance; and the better pleased with their abominable deities because their feasts were thus celebrated. *Note*: A drunkard will ever pay his adorations where there are *flagens of wine*. Such infamous conduct might well provoke God's abhorrence; yet, astonishing to tell! he was still willing to tender his grace, and to receive the returning penitent, though *an adulteress*. *Note*: The soul which is brought to a real sight of its own vileness, stands amazed at God's grace, that he should ever respect a wretch, where there was nothing to engage his love, but every thing to excite his loathing.

2. He describes the gracious method that God took to bring them home to himself. By the price that the prophet pays for this adulteress, is represented the vileness and worthlessness of that sinful people. It was but half as much as was paid for a slave, *Exod. xxi. 32.* and the barley may typify the wretched state to which, during their captivity, the Israelites should be reduced. *So I bought her, &c. and I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days, as a widow in solitude, and lamenting their past ill conduct: and thou shalt not be for another man, not commit adultery any more; so will I be also for thee;* after proper trial and correction and genuine repentance, God will again own the relation of a husband. *Note*: (1.) Though God has designs of grace towards a penitent sinner, he is sometimes pleased to leave him for a while under deep convictions and sad apprehensions of his state, the more to endure the mercy when he receives him into the bosom of *his love*. (2.) From the moment the grace of God is revealed to the sinner, he separates himself from his iniquities. (3.) God waits to be gracious: when we desire to return and be for him alone, he is ready to receive us, and engages to be *ours*.

2dly, This parable is particularly applied to the people of Israel.

1. They shall be left desolate as a widow. *They shall abide many days without a king and without a prince, &c.*

2 By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.

3 Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.

4 Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another: for thy people *are* as they that strive with the priest.

which has been the case with the ten tribes since their captivity by Salmaneser, and is at present the state of the whole Jewish nation, and has been above seventeen hundred years. They are without any form of civil government; have *no sacrifice*; and are without an *image*, &c. being entirely cured of idolatry. See the Annotations.

2. They shall at last, when penitently returning to the true Messiah, be received again as a wife. *Afterward*, when the days of their separation are ended, *shall the children of Israel return* from their long apostacy, and *seek the Lord their God, and David their king*, the rejected Messiah, whom they will then receive for their Lord and King, earnestly soliciting to be admitted into his church; and *shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days*, with filial fear of offending any more a God so gracious. Which prophecy, whatever reference it may have to those Jews who were converted by the first preaching of the Gospel, looks undoubtedly to some glorious future day for its full accomplishment. *Note*: (1.) They who would return to God and find mercy, must diligently seek him through the Son of his love. (2.) If Christ be our king, we must prove our loyalty by our fidelity. (3.) A sense of God's goodness, and of the baseness of ingratitude, more powerfully restrains a pious soul from offending than any servile fears of wrath.

CHAP. IV.

Ver. 1. Hear the word of the Lord, &c.] The prophet here begins a third discourse, according to the rabbies; which is manifestly distinct from the preceding, both as to the matter and manner. He was before predicting what should happen in future times, by way of prophetic vision; here he reproves those of the present time for such sins as then reigned among them; such as provoked God to send on them and their posterity the judgments foretold in the former chapter. The word *controversy* is forensic, and alludes to the actions of suits which one person has against another for injuries or damages received. So the Almighty is here represented as entering into judgment with the inhabitants of the ten tribes for their impieties, as being so many injuries to his honour, for which he demands satisfaction. The reader will find the same evils objected against this people by other prophets.

Ver. 2. By swearing, &c.] Swearing, and lying, and murder, and theft, and adultery break out, &c.

Ver. 3. Therefore shall the land mourn, &c.] Desolation, drought, and dearth shall come upon the whole land, shall consume

5 Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night, and I will destroy thy mother.

6 ¶ My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge : because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me : seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

7 As they were increased, so they sinned against me : therefore will I change their glory into shame.

8 They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity.

9 And there shall be, like people, like priest : and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings.

10 For they shall eat, and not have enough : they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase : because they have left off to take heed to the LORD.

11 Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart.

12 ¶ My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them : for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a-whoring from under their God.

13 They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof is good : therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery.

14 I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses when they commit adultery : for themselves are separated with whores, and they sacrifice with harlots : therefore the people that doth not understand shall fall.

15 ¶ Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend ; and come not ye

consume both men, and beasts, and fowls, and shall even extend itself to the inhabitants of the waters.

Ver. 4. Yet let no man strive, &c.] Let no one expostulate or reprove ; for all expostulation and reproof will be lost upon this people, such is their stubbornness and obstinacy.

For thy people are as they that strive, &c.] "It is in vain for you to reproach one another. You are given up as to an incurable malady ; for you are as a man who strives with the priest ; guilty of the highest degree of rebellion, and incapable of correction, by opposing the authorized interpreter of the law, and the typical intercessor between God and the people. This passage therefore refers to the Mosaic institutions." The law condemned those to death who resisted the authority of the priest, Deut. xvii. 12. Houbigant renders it, after the LXX, For thy people follow the rebellion of the priest ; that is to say, are as wicked as those priests who infamously deserted the service of God for that of idols.

Ver. 5. In the day] "Not for want of light to see thy way ; but in the full day-light of divine instruction thou shalt fall : even at the rising of that light, which is for the lighting of every man that cometh into the world." In this day-time, when our Lord himself visited them, the Jews made their last grand false step, and fell.

In the night] In the night of ignorance, which shall close thy day, the prophet shall fall with thee ; that is, the order of prophets among thee shall cease.

Thy mother] That is to say, the mother-city, the metropolis. So Capellus, Houbigant, and Archbishop Newcome. But Jerusalem is intended, not Samaria ; for Samaria was the metropolis of the kingdom of the ten tribes, not of the whole nation, the children of Israel in general.

Ver. 6. Destroyed for lack of knowledge] "The ignorance

"of the true principles of religion which prevails among the people of the ten tribes is the cause of those sins which draw down such heavy judgments upon them." Houbigant, instead of, Thou shalt be no priest to me, reads, That thou shalt not have any command with me : for it is plain, that he addresses the people, and not the priests. But in the next verse he introduces the word priests, which he reads thus, As the priests were increased, so have they greatly offended me ; and in the 8th verse, instead of, The sin of my people, he reads, The sin-offerings or sacrifices of my people ; and confirm their hearts by their own iniquity : that is, they confirm the people in the worship of the calves, by partaking themselves in that worship.

Ver. 12. Ask counsel at their stocks] Consult their wood ; that is to say, the images of their idols, made of wood, consult, as oracles, to foretel what is to come to pass, or to advise what measures should be taken.

Ver. 13. Oaks] That is to say, the evergreen oak, or ilex.

And elms] The acorn-tree, or the common oak.

Ver. 14. Are separated] Take part. The chapter ought to end with this verse.

Ver. 15. Though thou, Israel, &c.] Here a transition is made, with great elegance and animation, from the general subject of the whole people, in both its branches, to the kingdom of the ten tribes in particular. "Whatever the obstinacy of the house of Israel may be in her corruptions, at least let Judah keep herself pure. Let her not join in the idolatrous worship at Gilgal or Bethaven, or mix idolatry with the profession of the true religion. As for Israel, I give her up to a reprobate mind." Then the discourse passes naturally into the detail and amplification of Israel's guilt.

Come not ye unto Gilgal] Gilgal was remarkable for the renewal

unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Beth-aven, nor swear, The LORD liveth.

16 For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place.

17 Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.

renewal of the rite of circumcision, when the Israelites first passed over Jordan; and after Jeroboam set up idolatry, it was famous for the worship of false gods. It is joined with *Beth-el*, called here *Beth-aven*, where Jeroboam's calves were worshipped. *Beth-el* signifies the *house of God*, and was so called by Jacob upon God's appearing to him there. But when it became the seat of idolatry, it was called *Beth-aven*, or *the house of vanity*. See Lowth, and Calmet.

Ver. 16. For Israel slideth, &c.] Houbigant renders it, *As an untamed heifer, when the Lord would have fed them, &c.* Dr. Chandler observes, that the word סוררה *soverab*, rendered *backsliding*, properly signifies an untamed, refractory, mischievous heifer, wantonly running and frisking about, or stung by the gad-bee, and vexed by it almost to madness. The LXX render the words emphatically, *As a stung heifer madly leaps about, so hath Israel grown mad, refractory, and obstinate*. See Chandler's *Life of David*, vol. ii. p. 59.

In a large place] That is to say, in an uninclosed place, a wide common. They shall no longer be fed with care in the rich inclosures of God's cultivated farm; but be turned out to browse the scanty herbage of the waste. That is, they shall be driven into exile among the heathen, freed from what they thought the restraints, and of consequence deprived of all the blessings and benefits, of religion. This dreadful menace is delivered in the form of severe derision: a figure much used by the prophets, especially by Hosea. Sheep love to feed at large. The sheep of Ephraim shall presently have room enough. They shall be scattered over the whole surface of the vast Assyrian empire, where they will be at liberty to turn very heathen.

Ver. 18. Their drink is four] *Drunkennes hath turned them away*. Houbigant. Those who understand it according to our translation, suppose that the prophet means the wine which was poured out in libations to their false gods. The Chaldee renders it, *Their princes have multiplied banquets by rapine*. See Pococke. The allusion is to libations made with wine grown dead or turning sour. The image represents the want of all spirit of piety in their acts of worship, and the unacceptableness of such worship in the sight of God; which is alleged as a reason for the determination, expressed in the preceding clause, to give Ephraim up to his own ways. "Leave him to himself," says God to his prophet; "his pretended devotions are all false and hypocritical; I desire none of them."

Ver. 19. The wind hath bound her up, &c.] *A whirlwind shall involve her in its eddies*. Houbigant. One of the Jewish expositions is, "The wind is joined to her wings, as it is with a bird which it suffereth not to rest till it hath carried her afar off: so shall the armies of the enemy come against them, and carry them away captive."—An admirable image of the condition of a people torn by a conqueror from their native land, scattered in exile to the

18 Their drink is four: they have committed whoredom continually: her rulers *with* shame do love, Give ye.

19 The wind hath bound her up in her wings, and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices.

four quarters of the world, and living thenceforward without any settled residence of their own, liable to be moved about at the will of arbitrary masters, like a thing tied to the wings of the wind, obliged to go with the wind whichever way it set, but never suffered for a moment to lie still. The image is striking now; but must have been more striking, when a bird with expanded wings, or a huge pair of wings without head or body, was the hieroglyphic of the element of the air, or rather of the general mundane atmosphere, one of the most irresistible of physical agents. *Hath bound*, should be rendered, *is binding*, the present tense, to denote instant futurity. See Bishop Horley.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Israel's sins are the cause of all her miseries.

1. The prophet in God's name summons the people to attend the charge that he is about to lay against them. *Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land*. Sin was the high offence, the cause of all their miseries and ours; and in God's chosen nation it was more exceeding sinful.

2. Their indictment charges them with many high crimes and misdemeanors; for one of a thousand of which they cannot answer him. *There is no truth*: hypocritical towards God, and faithless towards men, their professions were deceit, and their promises falsehood: *nor mercy*; for where honesty is banished, charity cannot subsist. They paid no regard to the distresses of the indigent; and, wrapped up in themselves, with unfeeling disregard beheld the miseries of others. *Nor knowledge of God in the land*: they desired not to know him, their hearts were averse from his teachings; and this wilful ignorance was at once the cause and aggravation of their other sins. *By swearing*, they increased their load of guilt, wantonly profane, and taking God's name in vain: *and lying*; they added perjury to profaneness, and in their ordinary conversation copied closely after their father the devil, who was a liar from the beginning: *and by a complication of all the most enormous crimes they filled up the measure of their iniquities; by killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, with lawless violence, unrestrained by the laws of God or man, as a torrent, that sweeps away every mound, and deluges the country. And blood toucheth blood*; so vast is the effusion of it, occasioned by the frequency of murders, or the dreadful massacres of the successive kings, each grasping at the crown over the corpse of his predecessor, 2 Kings, xv. 8—30.

3. An awful sentence is passed upon them: for such sins, wherever they are found, are sure to meet a just recompense of reward. *Therefore shall the land mourn*, laid waste and desolate with famine and the sword; *and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field,*

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God's judgments against the priests, the people, and the princes of Israel, for their manifold sins, until they repent.

[Before Christ 780.]

HEAR ye this, O priests; and hearken, ye house of Israel; and give ye ear, O

field, and with the fowls of heaven, pining for want, or consumed with war and pestilence; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away, that no food may remain to satisfy their hunger. *Note*; God can quickly consume a sinful land: he has only to withdraw his mercies, and we perish immediately.

4. Their case is desperate. *Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another*: either these are the words of the incorrigible people, silencing their reprovers; or of God to the prophet, enjoining him and other good men to desist from their labours, and abandon them to ruin: *for thy people are as they that strive with the priest*; they are so impudent in sin, that they would fly in the face even of the priests of God who admonished them; or all were become so bad, that, if a priest dared reprove them, they retorted on him, Physician, heal thyself. *Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, the day of vengeance approaching*; or *to-day*, immediately the wrath shall go forth; and the prophet also, the false prophets who deceived them with lying divinations, shall fall with thee in the night of deep adversity, which approaches; and I will destroy thy mother, the nation in general; for the people of Judæa as well as the ten tribes are here doomed to utter ruin. *Note*; (1.) They who are deaf to rebuke are on the precipice of ruin. (2.) We are bound not to suffer sin upon our brethren, without friendly admonition; but when we perceive them exasperated, instead of humbled, silence becomes duty. (3.) When sinners strive with their faithful ministers, and refuse to hear, their blood is on their own heads. (4.) They who have contributed to seduce others shall meet the heaviest vengeance in the day of recompense.

2dly, The sin and punishment of the ungodly priests correspond with each other.

1. They rejected the knowledge of God, and suffered the people to perish for lack of it. And though this will be no excuse for the people, who chose darkness rather than light, yet will their blood be required at the negligent watchman's hands. *I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me*, cut off both from the office and benefit of the priesthood. *Note*; (1.) Ignorance in a priest or minister of religion is doubly scandalous, and wilful ignorance the more atrociously criminal, as thereby not only their own souls but the souls of others are destroyed. (2.) Ignorance in the people is so far from being the mother of devotion, that it is the forerunner of destruction. (3.) Though, in such careless days as ours, men unqualified by ignorance, and scandalous by immoralities, are too often permitted to call themselves ministers of God, he will with abhorrence reject their pretensions, and in the great day drive them from his throne with a—*Depart, accursed, I never knew you*.

2. They forgot the law of God, took no pains to re-

house of the king; for judgment is toward you, because ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor.

2 And the revoltors are profound to make slaughter, though I have been a rebuker of them all.

member it themselves or inculcate it upon others; therefore God threatens, *I will also forget thy children*, the children of the priests, who should be degraded, and not succeed their fathers in the priesthood. Wicked parents thus bring a curse upon their own offspring.

3. The abuse of their blessings shall prove their bane. *As they were increased in numbers, wealth, and power, so they sinned against me with the more daring profaneness and insolent ingratitude*; therefore will I change their glory into shame, when, led into a wretched captivity, they should be stripped of all their possessions and honours, and mingle with the ignominious heathen.

4. They were luxurious. *They eat up the sin of my people, feasting on the sin-offerings*; and while they were careless about instructing the people concerning the nature and design of the sacrifices, they fattened themselves upon the choicest part of them; *they set their heart on their iniquity*, wholly given up to the indulgence of their appetites; or *lifted up their soul thereunto*, well-pleased that the people should continue to sin, because this would multiply the sacrifices, and provide food for their gluttony. *And there shall be like people, like priest, equally ignorant, intemperate, and profane*; for when priests shew such ill examples, no wonder that a general profligacy of manners ensues. *And I will punish them for their ways*: they who were companions in sin shall suffer together; and *reward them their doings*, pouring out that vengeance upon them which they have provoked: *for they shall eat, and not have enough*; either their insatiable appetites should ever be craving, and find no satisfaction; or during the famine, or in captivity, they should know the pinchings of hunger, and pine away for very want of sustenance.

5. They committed fornication, and thought to have a numerous issue by these unlawful means; but they shall not increase; God will disappoint their desires, or slay their children: *because they have left off to take heed to the Lord*; apostate from his service, and open violators of his law. *Note*; (1.) When God is disregarded, men stop at no abominations. (2.) God's curse will blast all unlawful ways of increase.

6. They had given their hearts to wine and wicked women. *Whoredom and wine, and new wine, take away the heart*, utterly estrange it from God; or such sins stupify the conscience, and rob men of their reason, so that they act as if infatuated. Thus does the curse ever follow the sin, close as the shadow does the body.

3dly, The prophet goes on to charge upon the people of Israel those atrocious crimes which cried for vengeance.

1. Their sins were,

[1.] Idolatry. *The spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err*: their hearts were violently bent upon their idols, with such raging desires as govern the most licentious of mankind;

3 I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me: for now, O Ephraim, thou com-

mittest whoredom, and Israel is defiled.

4 They will not frame their doings to turn

mankind; and so astonishingly besotted, that they leave the living God, who would have been their husband, father, friend, almighty to help, all-wise to direct them, to *ask counsel at their stocks*; as if the log that they had squared and planed could teach them: and *their staff* declareth unto them; either some little image engraved on them, to which they paid their devotions: or they used the divinations of the heathen; and by the falling of their staff took directions for their conduct. To these senseless idols they offered their sacrifices and incense, upon the tops of the mountains, under oaks and poplars, and elms, because the shadow thereof is good, copying the manners of their heathen neighbours, and choosing the same places for the scenes of their impure rites and ceremonies.

[2.] Adultery. They are separated with whores, and sacrifice with *herlots*, the worship of their gods being celebrated with such abominations; and this continually, these crimes were their habitual practice.

[3.] Bribery, and perversion of justice. Her rulers with *stame do love, Give ye*. Nothing could be obtained of them without a fee, who should have administered justice freely; and gain, not right, swayed their decisions.

[4.] They obstinately persisted in their wicked ways. Israel slideth back, as a backsliding heifer, or refractory, that no fence can keep in; or that will not suffer the yoke, and, when goaded to draw, goes backward. So had they been, refusing to be restrained by God's law, or kicking against the pricks of the prophetic warnings and afflictive providences: and so wedded were they to their idols; sins these, which, wherever they are found, will assuredly, as here, provoke God's wrath and indignation against the guilty soul: for the people that doth not understand the danger and evil of their ways shall fall, and perish in their iniquities.

2. God threatens them with a variety of evils, as the righteous punishment of their transgressions.

[1.] Their daughters shall be given up to every vile and licentious practice, led by the bad examples of their husbands and fathers; and permitted with impunity to do so, as a punishment for the like crimes which they had committed.

[2.] They shall be given as sheep to the slaughter. The Lord will feed them as a lamb in a large place, and their prosperity shall hasten their perdition; or as one lamb, separated from the flock and in a desert, falls a prey to the devouring wolves, so should they be given up to the hand of the Assyrians, and dispersed in their vast empire.

[3.] God will abandon them to their own hearts; and a heavier curse cannot fall upon the sinner, than when God withdraws all his grace, and faith, Let him alone; let my Spirit no more strive, nor ministers rebuke, nor conscience check, nor providences restrain, nor mercies affect him: then his doom is fixed.

[4.] God will make their sins their punishment, as the drunkard often proves. Their drink is sour, their stomachs overcharged, and sickness like death seizes them, till every table is filled with vomit.

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[5.] They shall be hurried away captives. The wind bath bound her up in her wings: the Assyrians, like a whirlwind, shall carry all before them; and then, too late, they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices, when their folly, in trusting to idols, and departing from God, will be made manifest.

3. Judah is admonished to take warning by Israel's sin. Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend. Some interpreters suppose, that this is rather a caution to Israel, among all their other sins, not to draw their brethren of the house of Judah to offend with them, which would aggravate their guilt. But it is rather addressed to Judah, who might be tempted to join with the house of Israel in idolatry, which would be more criminal in them, who had the temple in the midst of them, and had not yet apostatized from God; and therefore they are forbidden to meet the Israelites in their places of idolatrous worship, Come not ye unto Gilgal, the chief scene of their wickedness, see chap. ix. 15. xii. 11. neither go ye up to Beth-aven: once the name was Bethel, the house of God; but since the golden calf has been erected there, it is Beth-aven, a house of iniquity or vanity, and to be shunned as the plague: nor swear, The Lord liveth; profanely, or falsely, or thoughtlessly taking this awful name into their lips. Note, (1.) The more advantages we enjoy to know God, and the more obligations we are under to cleave to him, the more will every departure from him bring aggravated guilt. (2.) They who would abstain from sin must shun the company of evil men, and never venture into the places of temptation: when we are out of the path of duty we must not expect protection. (3.) They who shew no sacred reverence for God's name, evidently declare the profaneness and impiety of their hearts.

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Ver. 1. Hear this, O priests] We may collect from this passage, that there was on Mizpah, beyond Jordan, and upon Tabor, on this side of it, either golden calves or other idols, whose worship was favoured by the great men of Israel. The rabbies tell us, that Jeroboam placed garrisons at Tabor and Mizpah, to prevent the people from going up to Jerusalem. But if Hosea alluded to garrisons, he would rather have spoken of force than of snares. See Houbigant.

Ver. 2. And the revolvers are profound, &c.] Have gone deep in slaughter: I will call them all to discipline. Calmet. The Hebrew word שׂוֹטִים *setim*, which we translate the revolvers, signifies scouts on horseback, attendants on the chace, whose business it was to scour the country all around, and drive the wild beasts into the toils. The priests and rulers are accused as the seducers of the people to apostacy and idolatry, not merely by their own ill example but with premeditated design, under the image of hunters deliberately spreading their nets and snares upon the mountains. And their agents and emulraries, in this nefarious project, are represented under the image of scouts on horseback in this destructive chace. The toils and nets are whatever in the

3 P

external

unto their God : for the spirit of whoredoms *is* in the midst of them, and they have not known the LORD.

5 And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face : therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity ; Judah also shall fall with them.

6 They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the LORD ; but they shall not find *him* ; he hath withdrawn himself from them.

7 They have dealt treacherously against the LORD : for they have begotten strange children : now shall a month devour them with their portions.

8 Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, *and* the trumpet in Ramah : cry aloud *at* Beth-aven, after thee, O Benjamin.

9 Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of

rebuke : among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be.

10 The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound : *therefore* I will pour out my wrath upon them like water.

11 Ephraim *is* oppressed *and* broken in judgment, because he willingly walked after the commandment.

12 Therefore *will* I *be* unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness.

13 When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah *saw* his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb : yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound.

14 For I *will* *be* unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah : I, *even* I, will tear and go away ; I will take away, and none shall rescue *him*.

15 ¶ I will go *and* return to my place,

external form of idolatry was calculated to captivate the minds of men : magnificent temples, stately altars, images richly adorned, the gaiety of festivals, the pomp, and, in many instances, even the horror of the public rites. All which was supported by the government at a vast expence. The imagery therefore in this passage represents a spiritual chase. The wild beasts are men, not influenced and restrained by the true principles of religion : the principal hunters, the kings of Israel and the apostate priests, who, from motives of self-interest, and a mistaken and wicked policy, encouraged idolatry, and supported its institutions : *the scouts on horseback*, the subordinate agents in the business : the slaughter, spiritual slaughter of the souls of men.

Ver. 4. *They will not frame their doings*] *They will not give their thoughts, or minds.* Houbigant.

Ver. 5. *And the pride*] *The arrogance of Israel is discovered in his countenance.* Houbigant.

Ver. 6. *They shall go with their flocks, &c.*] They shall run up and down, from altar to altar, with all their stock, as if they could buy off their sins and redeem their sorrows by hecatombs and holocausts. They think that they have merited better at the hands of Jehovah by their thousands of rams and ten thousand rivers of oil, (Micah, vi. 7.) than to fall, as in the former verse ; or to be relinquished by him, as here. Lo, this is the conduct of graceless hypocrites : by their mere outward performances they think to oblige God, and by their good deeds to atone for their bad.

Ver. 7. *For they have begotten, &c.*] By their alliance with strange women, contrary to the law. Or, it may have a spiritual allusion to their vices and deviations. Instead of, *Now shall a month, &c.* Houbigant reads, *Now shall the canker consume their inheritance.* Some, however, understand it as alluding to the space of time in which the Assyrians should come and devour Israel.

Ver. 8. *Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah*] *Lo! the cornet is sounded in Gibeah ; and the trumpet in Ramah : howlings are heard at Beth-aven, behind thee, O Benjamin.* Houbigant. The prophet here declares the approach of the Assyrian, in the same animated style and manner as Isaiah, chap. x. 28, &c.

Ver. 9. *Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke*] God has his day of sharp rebukes or chidings for every impenitent sinner ; in which sufficient arguments shall be used to render him utterly inexcusable, if he reject them : so that Ephraim shall have nothing to say, why he should not be desolated ; yea, so desolated, as to make the beholders amazed thereat, as the Hebrew word שָׁמַח *sham-mah*, imports : the day which now comes, is a day, not of correction but of execution.

Ver. 10. *The princes of Judah, &c.*] “ They have violated the most sacred laws of the Almighty, upon which “ not only the ordinances of his worship, but also the rights “ and properties of men depend ; and are become guilty “ of the same injustice and confusion with those who re- “ move the ancient land-marks.” See Ezek. xlvi. 18. and Poccocke.

Ver. 11. *Ephraim is oppressed*] *Ephraim shall be oppressed, shall be broken in judgment, because it pleased him to walk after vain things.* Houbigant.

Ver. 12. *Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth*] A moth in the garment, a worm in the flesh. From small and unperceived beginnings, working a slow, but certain and complete destruction.

Ver. 13. *When Ephraim saw his sickness, &c.*] Houbigant translates this verse throughout in the future. *Ephraim shall see,—shall go, &c.* and instead of *king Jareb*, he reads, *to the king his avenger* ; meaning the Assyrian, Tiglath-Pileser, before mentioned.

Ver. 15. *I will go, and return, &c.*] “ I will give them “ up to exile, and withdraw myself, till with a sincere “ humiliation

till they acknowledge their offence, and seek me early.
seek my face: in their affliction they will

“humiliation they implore my favour.” The Chaldee expresses the sense in the following manner: “I will take away my majestic presence from among them, and will return into heaven.”

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Again the prophet returns to the charge, and cites the king, priests, and people of Israel, to hear their accusation and doom from God, who knew all their wickedness, however hypocritically covered, or committed in secret. *Note*; (1.) No sinner is so great as to be above God’s judgments, or so mean as to be overlooked by him. (2.) God knoweth the hidden things of darkness; nor can the shadow of death hide the workers of iniquity.

1. He charges a variety of crimes upon them: [1.] They studied to draw their neighbours to join in their idolatries: *Ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor*; two mountains, where probably their idol altars stood near the borders of Judah, as snares set by-hunters to entrap their game. Some have suggested, that here Jeroboam placed spies to see who went up to Jerusalem at the solemn feasts, that they might be prosecuted for it on their return. *Note*; They, who under the cloak of friendship would entice us into sin, are our most mortal enemies. [2.] *The revolters are profound to make slaughter*; apostates being the bitterest persecutors; they who had themselves revolted from God, laid snares to murder those who refused to comply with their wicked ways: or, as the words may be interpreted, they offered vast sacrifices with a show of devotion; to provide noble entertainments, in order to seduce the unwary to join with them; *though I have been a rebuker of them all*; God by his prophet had awfully and repeatedly warned them of their wickedness, yet they still persisted in it; and this greatly aggravated their guilt. [3.] They committed fornication: *the spirit of whoredoms possessed their hearts, and the acts of it defiled their bodies*; this God saw, who searcheth the heart, and whose eye no deeds of darkness, however secretly committed, can escape. Let guilty sinners know it and tremble. [4.] They were wilfully ignorant, and obstinately perverse: *They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God*; utterly averse to all the means and methods which might lead to their conversion; *and they have not known the Lord*; for indeed they desired not the knowledge of his ways. [5.] *The pride of Israel doth testify to his face*; so open, avowed, and notorious, they were grown insolent in sin, and past shame, as their very looks declared. [6.] They dealt treacherously against the Lord; as a wife that leaves her husband for another: *they have begotten strange children*; either living in fornication, or intermingling in marriages with the heathen, or bringing up their children in the same idolatries which they themselves committed; and dreadful is that parent’s guilt, whose children’s murdered souls, destroyed by his example, or bad instructions, shall cry for vengeance against him.

2. He pronounces sentence upon them: *Judgment is toward you*. God is ready to call them to his bar, and

make them know his terrible wrath. *They shall fall in their iniquity*; under the load of unrepented guilt: *and Judah shall fall with them*; who, copying their wicked ways, shall partake of their ruin, led captive with them into the same strange land. So surely shall companions in sin suffer together; and they who persist in their iniquities shall in them assuredly perish: nor shall their forced return to God in the day of their distress stand them in any stead. Though they go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord, their hearts being unhumbled, and their prayers merely extorted by the apprehension of danger, God will pay no regard to them; *they shall not find him*, so as to obtain any favour or protection; *he hath withdrawn himself from them*, and left them to their deserved ruin. There is a time when God will be no more entreated; and they who will not know the day of their visitation shall be disregarded when they cry in the day of their calamity: and now their swift destruction approaches, *a month shall devour them with their portions*; they, and all they possess, shall be shortly ruined. Or this may refer to their new-moons and sacrifices, on which they relied; but, so far from being of use to them, their hypocritical services added but to their guilt, and hastened the wrath of God upon them. *Note*; (1.) The sinner’s day is near, when vengeance will overtake him. (2.) They who take up with their portion in this world, will find to their sorrow how wretched a choice they have made.

2dly, The judgment was denounced, and lo! it is even now at the door.

1. The alarm is sounded: *Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah*; the frontier towns of Judah, to let them know the approach of the enemy: *cry aloud at Beth-aven: after thee, O Benjamin*; the enemy is on thy back, and ready to advance from the conquest of Israel to invade Judæa. When our neighbour’s house is on fire, it is high time to look to our own. The ruin of those who are cut off in their sins, should be a warning to the survivors.

2. The destruction of Ephraim had been long foretold: *Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke*; led captive by Salmaneser: *among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be*; the prophets repeatedly gave them notice of what would be the consequence of their sins; but they rejected their admonitions, and disbelieved their prophecies, and therefore were without excuse. *Note*; Sinners turn a deaf ear to the denunciations of God’s wrath, and would fain treat them as chimeras; but they will find them terrible realities, and things that shall surely be.

3. The princes of Judah took no warning by their neighbours’ fall, but equalled them in iniquity, and therefore must perish together with them. *The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound, or land-mark*; paid no regard to property, but oppressed their inferiors, and seized their possessions: or, figuratively taken, they refused to be kept within any bounds by God’s law, and broke through every restraint: *therefore I will pour out my wrath upon them*

CHAP. VI.

An exhortation to repentance. A complaint of their untowardness and iniquity.

[Before Christ 780.]

COME, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.

them like water; which, as the deluge, shall sweep them away. Note; They who abuse their power to oppression, shall be made to know that there is a judge above, the patron of the injured, and the avenger of their wrongs.

4. Ephraim's sin and ruin are again mentioned. [1.] Their sin. They willingly walked after the commandment; obeying the orders of Jeroboam and his idolatrous successors, who enjoined the worship of the calves: and, far from opposing these impious commands, the people, very well pleased with the idolatrous worship, readily complied with them. For this God threatens, [2.] To punish them. *Ephraim is oppressed, and broken in judgment;* this was a part of their immediate sufferings, being ruled by tyrants, and broken with the oppression and injustice of their princes and magistrates; and this was a just judgment upon them. They who willingly became slaves to the impious commands of their princes, deserved the galling yoke laid upon them. Servility invites the exercise of tyranny. *Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth;* silently, and by degrees weakening them, and bringing them to destruction: *and to the house of Judah as rottenness in the bones, that spreads, and destroys the substance; or a worm that eats into the heart of the tree, and it withers away. Note; Vengeance comes slowly, that sinners may have space to repent; but if they neglect the warnings given them, they are sure to be undone at the last.*

5. The methods that they took to help their weakness were sinful, and proved ineffectual: *When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb;* probably the same with Pul, or Tiglath-Pileser, (see 2 Kings, xv. 19: xvi. 7: xvii. 3.) *yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound;* on the contrary, he increased, instead of relieving their malady, and helped forward their ruin, 2 Kings, xv. 29: 2 Chron. xxviii. 20. So surely will they, who fly to creature dependencies, and forsake God, find them miserable comforters, and rue their foolish choice.

6. Provoked by such conduct, God threatens them with heavier judgments. Before, he was but as a moth; but now, *I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah;* devouring and destroying them by his judgments, and by the sword of the Assyrians: *I, even I, will tear and go away as a lion, fearless of being pursued; I will take away,* as that ravenous beast drags the prey to his den, *and none shall rescue him;* those who survived of the people of Judah and Israel, should be carried captives, and none be able to release them from this afflictive dispensation, till he should return in mercy unto them. *I will go and return to my place, abandoning them for a season to*

2 After two days will he revive us; in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.

3 Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.

their miseries, till his chastisements had humbled their stubborn hearts, and they acknowledge their offence, taking shame for their abominations, and confessing the justice of their punishment; and seek my face for pardon and restoration: for in their affliction, brought to a sense of their sins by the sufferings they endure, they will seek me early; with fervent importunity, rising up betimes, and crying for mercy; and then there is hope that their miseries may come to an end. Note; (1.) When lesser chastisements are ineffectual, God will make sinners feel his heavy hand. (2.) If he depart from the soul, then nothing but misery is left behind him. (3.) When God sometimes appears utterly to have forsaken a people, he still waits for their humiliations and prayers, in order to return and be gracious unto them, if they will but repent. (4.) True penitents are always liberal in acknowledgments and self-reproaches. (5.) The afflictions, however severe, which drive the sinner to seek God's face, are in reality the greatest mercies.

CHAP. VI.

Ver. 1. Come, and let us return, &c.] Almost all the ancients connect this with the preceding chapter, by the words, And they shall say,—Come, &c.

Ver. 2. After two days, &c.] In the style of Scripture, captivity, oppression, servitude, are frequently represented under the name of death; and a deliverance from these evils is called a resurrection,—a return to light,—to life,—new life, &c. We have examples of this in Ezekiel, Daniel, and many other parts of Scripture. The captives in Assyria and Babylon, burdened with the weight of their evils, encourage each other, and say, "Come, let us return to the Lord: he it is who hath brought us into this estate under which we groan: he is able, if he think fit, to deliver us from it in two or three days: nothing is difficult to him. Full of mercy as he is, he will not permit us to continue long in captivity and oppression, wherein we are buried like the dead in the tomb." The number of two or three days denotes the readiness and facility wherewith they flattered themselves that the Lord would save them. It is easy to remark, that these words of the prophet have a farther and more noble respect than to the return of the people from captivity; and they have been generally understood, as referring to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ; most of the ancient interpreters supposing that St. Paul alludes to them, 1 Cor. xv. 4. See Calmet, and Poccoke.

Live in his sight] Live in his presence. Jehovah, who had departed, will return, and again exhibit the signs of his presence among his people. So the converted and restored

4 ¶ O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.

5 Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth.

6 For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice: and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings.

7 But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.

8 Gilead is a city of them that work iniquity, and is polluted with blood.

stored Jews will live in his presence. The two days and the third day, observes Bishop Horsey, seem to denote three distinct periods of the Jewish people. The first day is the captivity of the ten tribes by the Assyrians, and of the two under the Babylonians, considered as one judgment upon the nation; beginning with the captivity of the ten, and completed in that of the two. The second day is the whole period of the present condition of the Jews, beginning with the dispersion of the nation by the Romans. The third day is the period yet to come, beginning with their restoration at the second advent. R. Tanchum, as he is quoted by Dr. Pococke, was not far, I think, from the true meaning of the place. "The prophet," he says, "points out two times—and those are the first captivity, and a second. After which shall follow a third [time]; redemption: after which shall be no depression or servitude." And this I take to be the sense of the prophecy in immediate application to the Jews. Nevertheless, whoever is well acquainted with the allegorical style of prophecy, when he recollects, that our Lord's sufferings were instead of the sufferings and death of sinners; that true believers are baptized into his death; and by baptism into his death are buried with him; and that he, rising on the third day, raised us to the hope of life and immortality; will easily perceive no very obscure, though but an oblique, allusion to our Lord's resurrection on the third day: since every believer may speak of our Lord's death and resurrection, as a common death and resurrection of all the faithful saints of God.

Ver. 3. *Then shall we know, if, &c.] Let us meet together, therefore, and judiciously inquire after the knowledge of the Lord.* Houbigant. The captives of Babylon promise themselves that the Lord will come to them, and appear like the brightness of the morning, in the midst of the dark night of their exile; or as the refreshing rain upon the parched earth. So the Lord Jesus Christ, in his resurrection, appeared as the morning, or rather as the rising sun, to illuminate the world.

Ver. 4. *O Ephraim! what shall I do, &c.] This is the answer of the Lord to the prayer or promises of Judah and Israel.*

Your goodness] *רחם* *chesed*. The various senses of this word are well enumerated by Vitringa upon Isaiah xl. 6. But the general radical meaning of the word is by none so well developed, as by Mr. Parkhurst. Exuberance is included in the notion of it, in all its applications. The exuberant kindness of God to man; overflowing piety of man towards God; exuberant kindness of man to man; exuberant prurency of inordinate lust; exuberance of

wrath, and of reproachful language. In its good sense, the word "mercy" is inadequate, in the application of it, either to God, or man. As from God to man, exuberant or abundant kindness is in general the best English word. As between man and man, "exceeding kindness." In many passages in which it is rendered "mercy," it properly signifies "philanthropy," displaying itself in a general mildness and gentleness of manners. This is clearly the sense in Prov. xi. 17. and, I think, in many other passages, in which it is not applied to any individual act. As from man to God, "piety," swelling in the heart, and displaying itself in acts of devotion. In this place, I think, it signifies that sudden flow of piety, which occasionally comes upon men of very loose lives, if they are not wholly lost to all sense of religion; particularly under afflictions, which produce a momentary penitence.

Munster pertinently remarks, that the Jewish nation had its transient fits of reformation, cutting down the groves, killing the priests of Baal; but they soon returned to their abominations. Houbigant renders this latter clause of the verse, *That mercy may be present to you like a morning cloud, and as the dew which is poured forth early.*

Ver. 5. *Therefore have I hewed them]* Or, *Therefore have I cut them down.* Houbigant reads, *Certainly I have done what it pleased me to your prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth; and light shall arise from my judgments upon thee:* "That light which you hoped for, of the approaching morning, or of recovered liberty." See Houbigant.

Ver. 6. *I desired mercy, and not sacrifice.]* Or, *Rather than sacrifice.* See Matth. ix. 13. I think the word *רחם* *chesed*, which we translate *mercy*, is used here in a comprehensive sense; signifying both piety towards God, and philanthropy. I can find no single word to answer to it, but *charity*. For *charity*, in the evangelical sense, is the love of man founded upon the love of God, and arising out of it.

Ver. 7. *Like men]* It should be rendered, *Like Adam.* As Adam transgressed a plain command; so the Israelites transgressed the plainest and the easiest precepts. As Adam's crime was not to be excused by any necessity or want; so the Israelites, secure under the protection of Jehovah, had they continued faithful to him, had no excuse in seeking other aids. Adam revolted from God to Satan; so the Israelites forsook God to worship devils. Adam broke that one command, on which the justification of himself and his posterity depended; so the Israelites broke the one precept of love. See Bishop Horsey.

There] *And in that;* namely, in transgressing the covenant.

Ver.

9 And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way by consent: for they commit lewdness.

10 I have seen an horrible thing in the

house of Israel: there is the whoredom of Ephraim, Israel is defiled.

11 Also, O Judah, he hath set an harvest for thee, when I returned the captivity of my people.

Ver. 8. And is polluted with blood] "It is now no longer what it ought to be, a city of refuge, but the city of bloodshed and slaughter."

Ver. 9. So the company of priests murder, &c.] So the company of priests meet together, and murder the traveller at Shechem; that they may execute their wickedness. The prophet seems to mean that wickedness by which those men of the kingdom of Israel who worshipped the true God were prohibited from going to Jerusalem; and who, if they attempted to do so secretly, and were found out, were put to death. See Houbigant.

Ver. 11. Also, O Judah, a harvest is prepared, then when I shall bring back the captivity of my people. Houbigant. See ch. ii. 15. 21. Harvest-work is cut out for Judah at the season of bringing back the captivity. The tribe of Judah is in some extraordinary way to be an instrument of the general restoration of the Jewish people. Observe, that the vintage is always an image of the season of judgment; but the harvest, of the in-gathering of the objects of God's final mercy. I am not aware, that a single unexceptionable instance is to be found, in which the harvest is a type of judgment. In Rev. xiv. 15, 16. "the sickle is thrust into the ripe harvest, and the earth is reaped;" that is, the faithful are gathered from the four winds of heaven. The wheat of God is gathered into his barn, (Matt. xiii. 30.) After this reaping of the earth, the sickle is applied to the clusters of the vine; and they are cast into the great wine-press of the wrath of God. Rev. xiv. 18—20. This is judgment. In Joel, iii. 13. the ripe harvest is the harvest of the vine, that is, the grapes for gathering, as appears by the context. In Jer. li. 33. the act of threshing the corn upon the floor, not the harvest, is the image of judgment. It is true, the burning of the tares in our Saviour's parable, Matt. xiii. is a work of judgment, and of the time of harvest, previous to the binding of the sheaves. But it is an accidental adjunct of the business, not the harvest itself. I believe the harvest is never primarily, and in itself, an image of vengeance.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Their prayers promised a speedy return to God, in the close of the last chapter; and therefore the prophet, with the faithful souls among them, is represented as exciting and encouraging them to put in execution the gracious purposes that they had formed; for good desires should never be suffered to cool.

1. The matter of their exhortation is, *Come, and let us return unto the Lord*, from whom we have so greatly departed, renouncing now all other confidences and idol-worship, and depending on him alone for help.

2. The motives on which they press such a return, are many and powerful.

[1.] They are assured of his help and healing, if they will return. They had felt by dire experience his power

to destroy, and the same hand was as able to save them, and would assuredly be stretched out on their repentance to raise them from their depressed and wretched state. *After two days will he revive us, in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight*; though we lie, as to all national honours and advantages, like dead corpses in our graves during the captivity, he will not suffer us utterly to perish as a nation, but after a short time he will restore us again to our own land, and give to our penitent souls a sense of his favour, and the light of his countenance. And this may refer to their restoration from the Babylonish captivity, or look forward to their recovery from their present dispersion. These words also may well relate to Christ rising on the third day from the dead; in whom also his faithful people rise by virtue of their union with him. *Note*; (1.) If we are torn and smitten, whatever be the instrument, God's appointing, permitting, or suffering hand is to be acknowledged. (2.) Whatever the hurt of the sinner may be, however deep the wounds of his conscience, they are not past the divine Physician's cure. (3.) Nothing is so encouraging a ground to return to God, as a believing view of the riches of his grace in Christ Jesus.

[2.] They shall then have their knowledge of God increased: *Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord*; we shall in this way know his power, grace, and love; and, encouraged by what we have attained, shall be reaching after greater measures of divine knowledge. *Note*; (1.) The most desirable of all attainments is the knowledge of God. (2.) They who have any true knowledge of God, desire by prayer, the word, and ordinances, to increase it yet more abundantly, and to attain that heavenly state where they shall know even as they are known.

[3.] They shall then enjoy the richest consolations: *His going forth is prepared as the morning*; though God had left them to a dark night of affliction, yet, like the returning sun he was ready to arise upon them with healing in his wings; and sure as the return of the morning, and cheering as the light of day, would be the return of his favour and grace to them, whenever they truly sought him: *and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth*; in the abundance of his blessings, as these seasonable showers caused the barns to be filled with corn, and their vats to overflow with wine and oil. And these promises, whatever particular respect they had to the recovery of the Jews from Babylon, look forward to the days of the Messiah, the glorious Sun of Righteousness, whose blessed Gospel, like the dew of heaven, should drop upon the souls of sinners, and fill the face of the world with fruit: but especially they look forward to the final restoration of the Jewish nation.

2dly, There appeared promising hopes that a reconciliation would be effected: but we have,

1. Their

C H A P. VII.

A reproof of manifold sins. God's wrath against the people for their hypocrisy.

[Before Christ 780.]

WHEN I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria :

1. Their hypocrisy, and the concern that God expressed thereat : *O Ephraim, &c. O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? what could be done that he had not done to reclaim them; and, though it had been hitherto ineffectual, he speaks with reluctance, as yet unwilling to give them up, though they had so justly deserved it; for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away, so shortlived was the reformation under Jehu, and in the days of Hezekiah and Josiah. Note; (1.) God's compassion to sinners is amazing, and his patience and dealings with them must leave them without excuse. (2.) Many begin well, and for a while make a fair religious profession, whose goodness has no more abidance than the morning cloud, and vanishes as the early dew before the sun of persecution or the blasts of temptation.*

2. God had severely rebuked them for their unfaithfulness. *Therefore have I heaved them by the prophets, sharply reproving their hypocrisy, and cutting them to the heart with denunciations of wrath: I have slain them by the words of my mouth, devoting them to death, and then it is as sure if they do not repent, as if every word was a drawn sword; and thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth; God's warnings were clear and plain, and the afflictions that they suffered evidently came from his appointing or permissive hand; so that their impenitence was inexcusable, and all that came upon them must needs appear altogether righteous and just. Note; (1.) The hearts of sinners are so hard and knotty, that God's ministers must use the sharp two-edged sword, and hew them by the terrors of the Lord, and with the remonstrances of their baseness and ingratitude. (2.) The threatenings which God pronounces against the ungodly, if they do not repent, are sure to be executed; they are already as dead men.*

3. He tells them what he required of them. *For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings; for these had in themselves no intrinsic value; their only use was, to point out the necessity of an Atonement, and to lead them to a Saviour; and when they rested in the form of godliness, while they neglected the power of it, the most expensive sacrifices were of no avail. The thing that God required was their heart, not their beasts; that they should know, acknowledge, worship and serve him as their Lord and God, and exercise mercy, רחם *chesed*, which may be rendered *goodness*, comprehending the whole scope of practical godliness, and proceeding from the divine principle of the love of God and man in the heart; and this must ever be remembered, since without it all professions of religion are but an empty name.*

4. They shamefully transgressed the covenant like Adam the first sinner, or like men, the wicked ones in the old

for they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without.

2. And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness: now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face.

world, or the multitude of the ungodly who still abound; *there have they dealt treacherously against me; even in the very sacrifices that they offered, and their other religious acts, they played the hypocrite; their hearts were wrong, and their very services therefore an abomination. And this was evident from their practice; Gilead is the city of them that work iniquity, the whole country was given up to it, or that particular city Ramoth-Gilead, inhabited by priests and Levites, whose wickedness was more criminal, and the influence of their bad examples more extensively fatal; for none do such irreparable hurt to men's souls, or wound the cause of God so deeply, as profligate worldly idolatrous ministers; and is polluted with blood, for ungodly ministers are the bitterest persecutors. Probably, this being a city of refuge, a bribe would protect wilful murderers, and for filthy lucre the innocent were delivered into the hands of the avenger of blood. Nor is it a wonder to see them sell men's bodies, when we daily see the more criminal sale of God's souls. And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way by consent; the general body of them was corrupt, and they connived at and upheld each other in their wicked ways, and were ever ready to assist each other to persecute or oppress those against whom they bore enmity: or they murder in the way to Shechem, lying in wait for those pious Israelites who turned their backs on the calves, and were going up to Jerusalem to worship. They commit lewdness, or enormity, the most infamous crimes, with deep contrivance, as the word signifies; I have seen an horrible thing in the house of Israel; there is the whoredom of Ephraim, corporal and spiritual; Israel is defiled, the whole nation addicted to idolatry and lasciviousness. Also, O Judah, he hath set an harvest for thee, the time is fixed; and thou art ripe for ruin: or the words should be rather taken in another sense, and then the prophecy closes with a promise of mercy; But, O Judah, he hath set an harvest for thee, God hath joy in store for thee, when I returned, or return, the captivity of my people from Babylon; which would occasion great gladness through all the tribes; or, rather, it refers to their return to their own land from their present and last dispersion, which will prove the joy of the whole world. Note; (1.) Sin is a horrible thing; it should shock us wherever we see it committed. (2.) God's grace triumphs over our provocations, if we repent and return; and, though we deserve punishment, his thoughts toward us in such case will be thoughts of peace and not of evil.*

C H A P. VII.

Ver. 1. When I would have healed, &c.] Some commentators close the foregoing chapter with the former clause

3 They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies.

4 They *are* all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker, *who* ceaseth from raising after he hath kneaded the dough, until it be leavened.

5 In the day of our king the princes have made *him* sick with bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorners.

6 For they have made ready their heart like an oven, whiles they lie in wait: their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire.

7 They are all hot as an oven, and have devoured their judges; all their kings are

fallen: *there is* none among them that calleth unto me.

8 Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned.

9 Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth *it* not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not.

10 And the pride of Israel testifieth to his face: and they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek him for all this.

11 ¶ Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.

12 When they shall go, I will spread my net upon them; I will bring them down as

clause of the last verse; and read the present verse thus; *When I would have turned away the captivity of my people, when I would have baked, &c.—and the wickedness of Samaria; that they committed falsehood; and the thief, &c.*

Ver. 2. Have beset them about] Compass them about.

Ver. 4. They are all adulterers] In this and the following verses, Hosea makes a twofold comparison of the Israelites to an *oven*, and to *dough*. Jeroboam the son of Nebat set fire to his own oven, and put the leaven in his dough; and afterwards went to sleep; leaving an opportunity to the fire to heat his oven, and the leaven to raise his dough. This prince, determining to make his subjects relinquish their ancient religion, set fire in some measure to his oven, and mixed his dough with leaven. He himself used no violence; he contented himself with exhorting and proclaiming a feast. This fire spread very rapidly; and his bread was very soon infected with leaven. All Israel is seen running to the feast, and participating in these innovations. But what shall become of the oven, and the bread?—The oven shall be consumed by the flames. The king, princes, and people, shall be involved in its conflagration, ver. 7. Israel was put under the ashes, as a loaf well-baked and leavened; but, no care being taken to turn it, it was intirely burnt on one side, before those who had prepared it could eat it; and enemies and strangers came and carried off the loaf. See ver. 8, 9.

Ver. 5. The princes, &c.] The princes began to rage, or to be overheated with wine, &c. Houbigant.

Ver. 6. For they have made ready, &c.] Their heart burns as an oven; their fury smoketh forth all the night; and in the morn it burneth as a flame of fire. Houbigant.

Ver. 7. They are all hot as an oven] The prophet here describes the punishment of their crimes, keeping up the similitude under which he represented those crimes; as much as to say, "Because they have grown hot with wine, &c. like an oven, they shall be burned like an oven with the same fire which they have kindled. In this fire their judges, &c. shall be consumed." See Houbigant.

All their kings are fallen] The prophesy looks forward to the fall of the six last kings in perpetual succession,

Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, Hoshea.

Ver. 8. Among the people; Ephraim is a cake, &c.] Among the heathen, &c. This similitude of Ephraim to a *cake*, is accommodated to the Hebrew word *לחם* *balal*, rendered *mixed*, and which properly signifies the ingredients wherewith cakes are made, that they may be baked covered over with ashes and embers. *Ephraim* is said to *mix himself with the heathen*, partly because he worshipped their gods, and partly because he called in their aid, and made covenants with them. We have in the *Observations* an account from *Rauwolf*, of the manner in which the cakes here spoken of were made, and which is the *best* comment on these words of the prophet. Speaking of his entertainment in the tent of a *Curter*, on the other side the Euphrates, he says, "The woman was not idle, but brought us milk and eggs to eat, so that we wanted for nothing: she made also some dough for cakes, which were about a finger thick, and about the bigness of a trencher; as is usual to do in the wildernesses, and sometimes in towns also. She laid them on hot stones; and kept turning them, and at length she threw the ashes and embers over them, and so baked them thoroughly. They were very good to eat, and very savoury." When *Ephraim* is said to be a *cake not turned*, it must mean "baked on one side;" that is to say, serving God by halves, and halting between his service and the worship of idols. See *Observations*, p. 135.

Ver. 10. The pride of Israel, &c.] See chap. v. 5.

Ver. 11. Ephraim—is like a silly dove] Or, one which the fowler easily intercepts by his snares. Ephraim was deceived by the foolish counsels of those men, who are just before said to have their heads besprinkled with grey hairs; who now advised to go to the Egyptians, and now to the Assyrians; in the following of whose counsels Ephraim could not avoid falling into snares; because these nations were at enmity together; so that he could not unite with one, without incurring the opposition of the other.

Ver. 12. I will chastise them, &c.] I will then chastise them, when they shall follow the counsel given them. That is,

the fowls of the heaven ; I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard.

13 Woe unto them ! for they have fled from me : destruction unto them ! because they have transgressed against me : though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me.

14 And they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds : they assemble themselves for corn and

wine, and they rebel against me.

15 Though I have bound and strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against me.

16 They return, but not to the Most High : they are like a deceitful bow : their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue : this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.

“ I will make those very nations, whose aid they implore, the means of punishing them.”

Ver. 14. *And they have not cried unto me, &c.] Nor do they cry unto me from their heart : They howl on their beds, for the want of corn and wine : They are enraged, and take counsel or rebel against me.* Houbigant.

Ver. 15. *Though I have bound, &c.] But I will chastise them. I strengthened their arms, yet did they, &c.*

Ver. 16. *They return, but not to the Most High] They have endeavoured again to be without yoke : They are become like a deceitful bow : Their princes shall fall by the sword. For the wantonness of their tongue, they shall be a derision in the land of Egypt.* Houbigant. Bishop Horley translates the first clause of this verse, *They fall back into nothingness of condition*, observing, That the situation of the Israelites, as the chosen people of God, was a high degree ; a rank of distinction and pre-eminence among the nations of the earth. By their voluntary defection to idolatry, they debased themselves from this exaltation, and returned to the ordinary level of the heathen ; so far above which the mercy of God had raised them. Thus voluntarily descending from their nobility of condition, the Israelites returned to *Not-High*. For so the Hebrew *לֹא אֵל* *lo al*, literally found.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. What God had done for Israel. *I would have healed ;* restoring their civil state under Jeroboam the son of Joash to a flourishing condition, 2 Kings, xiv. 25, 26. or under Jehu, destroying the worship of Baal, 2 Kings, x. 25—30. and thus by his mercies he called upon them to forsake all their idolatries, and turn to him with their whole hearts.

2. They refused to be healed, when God had dealt with them in so much mercy ; then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria, the golden calves, were still kept, and their idolatries grew more open and infamous, and with them a train of iniquities entered.

[1.] *They commit falsehood* in their transactions with men, perfidious and deceiving, and in their professions to God hypocritical.

[2.] They were a set of banditti ; *the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without* : their perfidy to each other was such, that they were given up in the just judgment of God to be devoured one of another.

[3.] They left God far above out of their sight. *They consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness,*

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either careless about it, or infidel, as if God did not see, or would not punish them ; though he is the jealous God, who will in no wise spare the guilty, and from whom nothing is hid, nothing is secret. Now their own doings have beset them about, their sins are open, multiplied, notorious ; which every observer may discover, and much more God's all-seeing eye ; they are before my face : some understand this of the punishment that their sins should bring upon them ; as when Samaria was besieged, then it would be past doubt that God observed, and would punish them for their iniquities. Note ; (1.) Every sin has for its root infidelity. We promise ourselves impunity in our disregard of God's threatenings, and then dare to offend. (2.) Sooner or later God will convince the sinner, that he remembers his ways.

[4.] *They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies.* The people readily conformed to their ordinances, and worshipped the calves, while the priests flattered themselves with assurances, that God was as well served at Dan or Beth-el, as at Jerusalem : or, to curry favour, they were ever ready to blacken those whom the princes disliked, and with lying praises to cry up their favourites.

[5.] *They are all adulterers,* king, princes, priests, and people, both corporally and spiritually inflamed with lasciviousness, as an oven heated by the baker, who waiteth till his dough is leavened, and the oven thoroughly heated, and then puts in his loaves : so do these adulterers entertain their corrupt desires, and contrive how to gratify them ; and when their schemes are ripe, they lie in wait, to perpetrate their wickedness. Note ; They who thus burn in their lusts, may expect shortly to burn in hell.

[6.] They were given up to drunkenness and revelling. In the day of our king, his birth-day, or the anniversary of his coronation, or some festival instituted by him, then they caroused without restraint ; the princes have made him sick with bottles of wine, for this is one of the curses attendant upon drunkenness ; he stretched out his hand with scorn ; they grew daring over their cups, and with the king at their head made a jest of religion, and blasphemed the Most High ; for when men are intoxicated with liquor, they stop at no impiety or wickedness. They have made ready their heart like an oven, their drunkenness has set fire to their evil desires ; they lie in wait to seize their prey. As the baker kindles the fire, and, sleeping till morning, finds his oven hot, so burned their lewd hearts. Note ; Drunkenness is not only highly criminal in itself, but

C H A P. VIII.

Destruction is threatened for their impiety and idolatry.

[Before Christ 760.]

SET the trumpet to thy mouth. *He shall come as an eagle against the house of the*

LORD, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law.

2 Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee.

3 Israel hath cast off *the thing that is good*: the enemy shall pursue him.

it is the door at which every enormity enters uncontrolled.

[7.] They have devoured their judges, *hot as an oven* in wrath against them, and killing those magistrates who attempted to punish them for their crimes. *All their kings are fallen*; they were regicides, and joined with successive usurpers to murder one monarch after another.

[8.] They were sunk in hardened stupidity. *There is none among them that calleth unto me*; neither the ravages committed at home, nor the inroads of their enemies from abroad, nor any of the distresses in which they were involved, turned their thoughts to God, or brought them to their knees. *Note*; They who live without prayer, must continue hardened, and perish in their sins.

2dly, The sins and punishments of Israel are interwoven.

1. They were mingled among the heathen, either by intermarriages contrary to God's law, or by their alliances with them, and solicitations of assistance from them; or, worst of all, by learning their idolatries, and conforming to their customs. *Ephraim is a cake not turned*, burnt on one side, and dough on the other, and therefore unfit for use: the mixture of heathen superstition destroyed all the acceptableness of their worship to God. *Note*; (1.) Bad company is ever corrupting; they who mingle with such, will grow like them. (2.) Many professors are made up of inconsistencies, and, *like a cake not turned*, are ever swinging to extremes.

2. They were insensible of the decays under which they were hastening to dissolution. *Strangers have devoured his strength*, see 2 Kings, xiii. 7. xv. 19, 20. 29. *and he knoweth it not*, is not sensible of the loss sustained; *yea, grey hairs are here and there upon him*, the speaking symptoms of old age and death approaching; *yet he knoweth not*, is not aware of his danger, nor sensible how near he is to the precipice of ruin. *Note*; Declensions in religion, like these grey hairs, steal insensibly on many; and, though others perceive them distinctly, the backslider himself is not aware of them.

3. They were proud and unhumiliated; all the mortifying providences that they had undergone did not bring down their high thoughts of themselves, nor engage their penitent return to God. Notwithstanding their growing weakness and hastening ruin, *they do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek him for all this*; and this is the worst symptom of a sinner's case, when he still restrains prayer before God.

4. They were like a silly dove without heart, both foolish and timorous; and, instead of seeking to God in their distress, *they call to Egypt* for assistance, 2 Kings, xvii. 4. *They go to Assyria* for help, the people who had ever been the implacable enemies of their nation, and waited only

an opportunity to devour them. So senseless is the sinner; he courts those as his best friends who are his tempters and destroyers; but God will make them rue their folly; *when they shall go, I will spread my net upon them*, and bring them into difficulties inextricable; *I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven*, from the height of pride; *I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard*; sending upon them the judgments which they had heard so often read in his word, Lev. xxvi. Deut. xxviii. *Note*; (1.) They who leave the good ways of God, will soon find themselves entangled in misery. (2.) Pride must come down in humiliation, or be cast down by divine judgments. (3.) We should well observe the warnings of God's word, for not one jot or tittle of that shall fail.

5. They were revolters, rebellious, hypocritical, and ungrateful, notwithstanding all that God had done for them. *Woe unto them!* they rush on their own ruin, *for they have fled from me*; rejected his service, deserted his worship, and placed no dependence upon him; following their calves, and seeking to their neighbours in time of trouble, instead of God. *Destruction unto them*, sure and inevitable! *because they have transgressed against me*, violating his laws by the most atrocious crimes, and these aggravated by all the wondrous mercies that they had received at God's hands; *though I have redeemed them* of old so often, and of late so eminently out of the hands of their enemies, 2 Kings, xiv. 25. *Yet they have spoken lies against me*, setting up their idols, or hypocritically pretending reformation; or denying his word in the mouth of his prophets, or atheistically disbelieving his being or his providence. *And they have not cried unto me with their heart*, even when their sufferings extorted prayers from their lips, *when they howled upon their beds*, under God's heavy hand, or in their idol temples the beds of their adultery. They wanted to be rid of their sufferings, not of their sins; and then their loudest roarings were no better than the howlings of dogs; for no prayer can be acceptable to God, whilst unrepented iniquities are still embraced. *They assemble themselves for corn and wine*; these were the grand objects of their desires; they sought no spiritual blessings, but only asked meat for their lusts; no wonder, therefore, such applications were rejected. *And they rebel against me*, rejecting his government, and seeking to dethrone him, in order to exalt their idols in his seat. *Though I have bound and strengthened their arms*, healing their breaches under Josiah and Jeroboam, *yet do they imagine mischief against me*, persecuting his prophets, who rebuked them in God's name for their sins, or giving to their idols the honour of their successes, and charging God as the author of all their evils; thus with basest ingratitude requiting him. *They return*, they made a shew of doing so, as in the times of

Jehu,

4 They have set up kings, but not by me : they have made princes, and I knew it not : of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off.

5 Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off; mine anger is kindled against them : how long will it be ere they attain to innocency ?

6 For from Israel was it also : the workman made it; therefore it is not God ; but the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces.

7 For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind : it hath no stalk :

the bud shall yield no meal : if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up.

8 Israel is swallowed up : now shall they be among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein is no pleasure.

9 For they are gone up to Assyria, a wild ass alone by himself : Ephraim hath hired lovers.

10 Yea, though they have hired among the nations, now will I gather them, and they shall sorrow a little for the burden of the king of princes.

Jehu, but not to the Most High ; they quickly relapsed into idolatry ; or not on high, their affections are not led up to high and heavenly things, but grovel still on earth ; they are like a deceitful bow, whose arrow misses the mark, or breaks in the archer's hand as he draws the string ; so did they disappoint the expectations which their professions had raised. Therefore their princes shall fall by the sword of the Assyrians, or of conspirators, for the rage of their tongue, their blasphemies against God, and reviling all his prophets : this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt, the Egyptians will mock at their calamities, instead of bringing them assistance. Note : (1.) The effects of the sinner's tongue shall at last fall upon him. (2.) They who by their wickedness bring themselves into trouble, instead of pity justly meet with derision.

CHAP. VIII.

Ver. 1. Set the trumpet to thy mouth] Let the trumpet in thy mouth sound against the house of Judah. Houbigant. Hosea in this and the three following verses prophesies against Judah. Those who follow our interpretation suppose, that by the eagle here spoken of is meant Nebuchadnezzar. See Ezek. xvii. 3.

Ver. 2. Israel shall cry] They shall cry.

Ver. 3. Israel hath cast off] Israel, Israel, &c.

Ver. 5, 6. Thy calf, O Samaria] Houbigant reads these verses thus : Mine anger is kindled against them : when will they attain to innocency ? Thy calf, O Samaria, shall be cast off : It had Israel for its founder : the workman made it ; nor is it a god. Therefore the calf of Samaria shall be consumed in the fire.

Ver. 7. For they have sown the wind, &c.] Because they have sown the wind, they shall reap the whirlwind : The stalk shall be without grain : It shall yield no meal ; and if it yield it, strangers shall devour it. These proverbial expressions are used to signify that the rewards of men will always be according to their works. Jehovah, Jesus, whose right it is to judge, hath thus determined. They who sow iniquity, shall reap vanity. All the pains which the kings of Israel have taken to enrich themselves, and to strengthen their kingdom, being built on the foundation of apostasy and idolatry, shall prove like a blasted crop of corn ; the small increase whereof, if there be any, shall become a prey to their enemy. See Lowth and Houbigant.

The first clause of this 7th verse, observes Bishop

Horsley, predicts generally the dispersion of the ten tribes, and the demolition of their monarchy by the force of the Assyrian, represented under the image of a scattering wind and destroying whirlwind. The following clauses describe the progressive steps of the calamity, in an inverted order. " There shall be no stem belonging to him : " Nothing standing erect and visible in the field ; that is, the nation shall be ultimately so utterly extinguished, that it shall not be to be found upon the surface of the earth. But before this utter ruin takes place, it shall be impoverished, and reduced to great weakness. For " the ear, " upon the stem yet standing, shall be an ear of empty husks, " yielding no meal. " The nation shall not thrive in wealth or power. " And what perchance it may yield, strangers shall consume. " Before the extreme decay, represented by the barren ear, takes place ; its occasional temporary successes, in its last struggles, will all be for the enrichment and aggrandizement of foreign allies, at last the conquerors of the country.

Ver. 9, 10. For they are gone up to Assyria] These verses are connected with that preceding, and are thus translated by Houbigant : Because they go to the Assyrian, though the Assyrian is nothing more than a wild ass, [one who has no regard for any thing but himself,] ver. 10. Ephraim sends love-presents : Because they have sent these, I will immediately gather them among the nations ; and truly they shall be refreshed a little from the burden of the king and the princes. This is spoken ironically, and refers to the heavy tributes which were imposed upon the people for the support of the wars, and to the alliances which Israel was then forming.

Ephraim hath hired lovers] The prophecy alludes not exclusively to the bargain with Pul, but to the general profusion of the government in forming foreign alliances ; in which the latter kings both of Israel and Judah were equally culpable ; as appears by the history of the collateral reigns of Ahaz and Pekah. Lovers : every forbidden alliance with idolaters was a part of the spiritual incontinence of the nation. The Hebrew word *hithnuu*, rendered hired, might be more literally rendered gifted, or endowed. But to preserve any thing of the spirit of the original, it is necessary to use a word here capable of being applied to military bounties in the next verse. In the next verse God says, that whatever bounties the Israelites might offer, in order to raise armies of foreign auxiliaries ; he would embody

11. Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin.

12 I have written to him the great things of my law, *but* they were counted as a strange thing.

13 They sacrifice flesh *for* the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat *it*; *but* the LORD ac-

cepteth them not; now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins: they shall return to Egypt.

14 For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof.

body those armies; he would press the men, paid by their money, into his own service against them.

Ver. 11. Because Ephraim hath made, &c.] This verse may be thus paraphrased: "Since Ephraim, forsaking God, and that one altar, at which alone he required them to serve him, idolatrously multiplied altars to themselves,—altars against his command; (to do which was manifestly a sin in them;) therefore should those their beloved altars be accordingly occasions of great sin; and as such imputed to them to their condemnation. God would give them up to run on in their evil courses, till their iniquity was full, and they ripe for destruction; and then deliver them into the hands of their enemies, who should compel them to do that service at and to their idolatrous altars, which should appear a manifest punishment to them for those of their own. So should they be punished by that wherein they had offended." See Poccocke.

Ver. 12. I have written, &c.] And thus will I inscribe him [Ephraim]; they who were the masters [or teachers] of my law, are esteemed as strangers; "are become utterly uselefs;" ver. 8. God supported the Jews, that they might support the true religion; which as they had now neglected to do, there was no reason why God should support and defend them against the neighbouring kings. See Houbigant.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The prophet is here commanded to spread the alarm, *Set the trumpet to thy mouth*, and deliver at least his own soul, if he cannot save theirs.

1. He charges them in general as rebels and traitors against the Lord their king; *they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law*, by a variety of crimes, in direct violation of it, and by a general apostasy of heart from God, and disregard of his worship and service. *Israel hath cast off the thing that is good*, or, *him that is good*, even God; justly therefore are they rejected by him.

2. Because of this, *the enemy shall pursue him*: Salmaneser, the Assyrian king; *he shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord*, so they called themselves, and thought their relation to him as his family would be their protection; but when they had turned out such undutiful and rebellious children, God gave them into the enemy's hand; and, swift as an eagle hasteth to her prey, should he seize their country, and spread desolation on every side. *Note*; No external relation to God can profit us, if our hearts are alienated from him.

3. In their distress they will plead for help, as God's people. *Israel shall cry unto me*, but in vain, *My God, we know thee*, claiming an interest in him, and professing to

know him as the true God; but their professions are hypocritical, and therefore their prayers are rejected.

4. Several particular crimes are charged upon them. [1.] *They have set up kings, but not by me*; they took the government at first out of his hands, when he was their king; revolted from the house of David, and set up Jeroboam; and about this time several had mounted the throne successively on the murder of their predecessors, 2 Kings, xv. 8. and herein the people had not consulted God at all, but followed their own humour, and gratified their own passions; *they have made princes, and I knew it not*, without his approbation or consent, affecting independence, and shewing an utter disregard to God's honour and pleasure: and they may not hope to prosper who thus take their affairs into their own hands, and leave God far above out of their sight. [2.] They not only made themselves kings, but gods also; *of their silver and their gold have they made them idols*; and to this day the covetous do the same; *that they may be cut off* by their enemies, the Assyrians, when their gods of gold could yield them no assistance. *Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off*, was the cause of their being rejected of God, and given to the sword and to captivity; or *hath deserted thee*, failed their hopes in the day of trouble, and was seized among other spoils, and carried away by the king of Assyria. Probably, when Samaria became the capital, another calf might be erected there, or one of those from Dan or Beth-el was removed thither: *mine anger is kindled against them*, the idolaters, who worshipped the work of their own hands. *From Israel was it also*, erected with the approbation of the people, and molten out of their treasures; *the workman made it, therefore it is not God*, a most conclusive and irrefragable argument; *but the calf, or for the calf, of Samaria shall be broken in pieces*, a sure proof of its vanity; so far from helping them, it could not rescue itself from the hands of the enemy.

5. The prophet expostulates with them on their folly and obstinacy. *How long will it be ere they attain to innocency?* leaving these wretched dependencies, and returning to the pure worship of God; nor any longer provoke the fierce anger of the Lord. *Note*; It is the grief of ministers to behold the perverseness of sinners, and they cannot but warmly remonstrate against their provocations.

6. He warns them of the fatal issue of their ways. *For they have sown the wind*, in the fruitless labours of their idolatrous worship, and their expectation of help from these vanities, *and they shall reap the whirlwind*; they shall not merely be disappointed of their harvest, but reap their own destruction, swept away by the Assyrian army, as by a resistless whirlwind; *it hath no stalk*, their seed produces nothing; *the bud shall yield no meal*, withered with blasting and

C H A P. IX.

The distress and captivity of Israel for their sins and idolatry.

[Before Christ 760.]

REJOICE not, O Israel, for joy, as *other* people: for thou hast gone a-whoring

from thy God, thou hast loved a reward upon every corn-floor.

2 The floor and the winepress shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her.

and mildew; and if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up; so far would it be from a blessing to them, that when they prospered and grew wealthy in their sinful and idolatrous courses, their riches would be a temptation to their enemies to come and plunder them. And thus will every sinner and hypocrite's hope perish; they will reap as they sow, and find by dire experience that the wages of sin is death.

2dly, They who forsake God, forsake their own mercies.

1. Israel's ruin is foretold. *Israel is swallowed up*, their whole country shall be devoured, and themselves led captive by the Assyrians: *now shall they be among the Gentiles, as a vessel wherein is no pleasure*, dispersed, contemptible, and mean. They had profaned the crown of their glory, and therefore justly were trodden under foot. *Note*; They who dishonour their holy profession, deserve to be made despicable.

2. The cause of their desolations is, their departure from God. *For they are gone up to Assyria*, to engage their assistance, 2 Kings, xv. 19. *a wild ass alone by himself*, so obstinate, unruly, and headstrong were they in their ways; or such they should become when carried captive, they should experience every hardship in a strange land. *Ephraim hath hired lovers*, by expensive presents endeavouring to purchase the friendship of the neighbouring nations; thus deserting God, and changing a rock for a reed. *Note*; The sinner is as foolish as he is wicked; and instead of the happiness that he expects, really courts his own ruin.

3. Their lovers whom they courted will prove their destroyers. *Though they have hired among the nations, now will I gather them*, either their enemies against them, or themselves into the midst of their besieged cities, *as sheaves on the floor; and they shall sorrow a little for the burden of the king of princes*; the tribute imposed upon them by the king of Assyria, which is the prelude to greater evils approaching, and which should bring more bitter sorrows along with them. God thus gives warning before he strikes, and brings sinners first into lesser troubles, to see if that will lead them to repentance, before he pours out the vials of his wrath.

4. Their multiplied temples, altars, and sacrifices, shall stand them in no stead. *Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin*, to offer sin-offerings upon them with great shew of devotion, *altars shall be unto him to sin*; so far from expiating his crimes, the very altars would aggravate them, as being reared contrary to the divine prescription, Deut. xii. 3—5. and dedicated to the honour of the calves, and other idols. *I have written to him the great things of my law*, wherein all the great things which pertain unto life and godliness were clearly set forth; what God required of them, in what manner he would be worshipped and served, what sacrifices should be offered, and where; and what was the great end of the sacrifices, even to lead them to that atoning Blood that should be shed in the fulness of

time; *but they were counted as a strange thing*, they paid no regard to the institutions of God; and, after long disuse, counted the prophets who would bring them back to the true worship and service of God, as setters forth of strange doctrines. *They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat it*; instead of offering it to God, they feasted upon it themselves, and made their devotions minister to their luxury; no wonder, therefore, that *the Lord accepteth them not*, neither them nor their offerings; *now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins*, so far from pardoning them, that the very sacrifices of atonement which they offered should only add to their iniquities: *they shall return to Egypt*, whither many fled on the Assyrian invasion, and miserably perished, chap. ix. 3. 6. or their captivity in Babylon should be as another Egyptian bondage. *For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, his worship and ways, and buildeth temples to idols; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities*, placing their confidence on these feeble bulwarks, instead of the arm of Omnipotence; *but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof*, which we see fearfully accomplished, Jer. lii. *Note*; (1.) God's own word, not our fancies, must be the directory of our worship. (2.) The law of God contains great things to the enlightened mind, even the way to pardon, peace, life, and glory everlasting. If the things contained therein, to any appear *strange* and unaccountable, it is owing to the corruption, blindness, and ignorance of their fallen minds. (3.) Let not that which God hath written for our learning, be suffered to become strange through our neglect. (4.) Sacrifices for sin, while the love of it is unmortified, are abominable; they who think by their duties thus to commute for their iniquities, will find the works in which they chiefly trusted, turned into sin. (5.) They who think to fence against God's judgments, only build Babel walls.

C H A P. IX.

Ver. 1. Rejoice not, &c.] Rejoice not, O Israel, with joyous expectation, as the nations do [or among the nations]; for, &c. It should seem that this prophecy was delivered at a time when the situation of public affairs was promising; perhaps after some signal success, which had given occasion to public rejoicings. It is as if the prophet had said, "Those national successes, which might be just cause of rejoicing to other people, are none to thee; for thou liest under the heavy sentence of God's wrath, for thy disloyalty to him; and all thy bright prospects will vanish, and terminate in thy destruction. The Gentiles were not guilty in an equal degree with the Israelites; for, although they sinned, it was not against the light of revelation, in contempt of the warnings of inspired prophets, or in breach of any express covenant."

Thou hast loved a reward, &c.] Houbigant renders this, *And thou hast sought the rewards of adultery from every corn-floor*: that is, "Thou hast received for thy idolatry, those
" tithes

3 They shall not dwell in the LORD's land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean things in Assyria.

4 They shall not offer wine-offerings to the LORD, neither shall they be pleading unto him: their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners: all that eat thereof shall be polluted: for their bread for their soul shall not come into the house of the LORD.

5 What will ye do in the solemn day, and in the day of the feast of the LORD?

6 For, lo, they are gone because of destruction: Egypt shall gather them up: Memphis shall bury them: the pleasant places for their silver, nettles shall possess them: thorns shall be in their tabernacles.

7 The days of visitation are come, the days of recompense are come: Israel shall know it: the prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad, for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred.

8 The watchman of Ephraim was with

"tithes of the corn, which, if thou hadst served Jehovah, were to have been paid for the support of the temple." It is therefore added in the next verse, *The floor shall not feed them*; as much as to say, "Because thou hast loved and hast claimed to thyself the produce of the corn-floor, therefore I will utterly deprive thee of that produce." Instead of, *shall fail in her*, ver. 2. Houbigant and others read, *shall fail them*.

Ver. 3. *But Ephraim shall return to Egypt*] When Salmanaſer made the ten tribes captive, such as were able to escape the conqueror fled into Egypt, having implored the aid of that country against the Assyrians. It appears from the last clause, that the ten tribes, however inclined to idolatry, had before their captivity attended to the laws which prohibited the eating of unclean flesh.

Ver. 4. *Neither shall they be pleasing unto him*] Houbigant reads, *Neither shall their sacrifices be pleasing unto him, which are to them as the bread of iniquity*; or, such as is gained by injustice and fraud, whereby the offerer is polluted and not cleansed. *Bread for their soul*, means "Bread offered for their salvation;" a sufficient proof that these early Jews (for it is to be considered that Hosea was a very ancient prophet) had a speculative belief in the salvation of the soul, and consequently of a future state.

Ver. 5: *What will ye do in the solemn day*] "When the days of your feast shall come, and you shall find yourselves far from your own country, without temple, without prophets, without priests, without sacrifices, without solemn assemblies;—what will be your sentiments?" Though the Israelites of the ten tribes were schismatics, and did not go up to the temple at Jerusalem, they omitted not to celebrate, in their own manner, the feast of the Lord in their own country; and as these solemnities were always accompanied with festivity and rejoicings, it must have been a great mortification to be no longer able to celebrate them in the land of their captivity. See Calmet, and Houbigant.

Ver. 6. *The pleasant places, &c.*] *The precious things which they had purchased for silver*. The words are obscure; but the meaning seems to be, that the Israelites, upon the approach of the enemy, should bury in the earth the more valuable parts of their furniture.

Ver. 7. *The prophet is a fool, &c.*] *Stupid is the prophet, &c.*; that is to say, the false prophets, who foretel nothing but peace, shall be convinced of their folly and madness, when they see the events happen contrary to what they

had foretold. See Calmet and Lowth. The title of prophet seems to have been given to all of the prophetic order; that is, to all who had been educated in the schools of the prophets; because these were usually the persons to whom the gift of prophecy was imparted, though it was by no means given to all, or even to the greater part of them. Some, perhaps, among them pretended to it, who had never received it at all; and others, to whom it was in some degree given, temporized in the use of it, by profane accommodations to the humour of the people, the religious opinions, or the political measures of the court. Of the latter in particular we have a remarkable instance in those prophets of Israel, who encouraged Ahab to the expedition against the Syrian, for the recovery of Ramoth Gilead, which proved so fatal to himself. That the gross imposture of pretences to the spirit of prophecy by persons that had it not at all, was actually practised, seems to be implied in Micah, ii. 11. and Jer. xxiii. 31, 32. That those, who had the extraordinary gift, pretended, upon some occasions, to visions which they had never seen, and to commands which they had never received, is certain, from the very memorable history of the imposition practised by the old prophet, who dwelt in Beth-el at the time of the schism of the ten tribes, upon the man of God of Judah, who had prophesied against Jeroboam's altar, 1 Kings, xiii. The old prophet, whatever his crime might be in this deceit, and it certainly was great, appears to have been in his general character a true servant of God. But the more frequent crime was certainly that of temporizing, in the manner of delivering messages of warning, which had been really received. The persons guilty of this conduct were deeply implicated in the guilt of the nation, and were promoters of the idolatry to which the kings and the people were so much addicted; and they are reprov'd and threaten'd in every page of the prophetic writings. These are the persons, who, in this text of Hosea, under the title of prophets, are taxed with stupidity and madness. The communication of the gift of prophecy, to persons so false to the duties of their office, seems somewhat analogous to the communication of the miraculous gifts, in the primitive church, to many who made, if not a wicked, certainly an improper and injudicious use of them. And analogous to the threatened punishment of false teachers, in the latter ages of Christianity, was the punishment of these prevaricating prophets. "God sent them strong delusion that they should believe a lie." See 2 Theſſ. ii. 11. "If the

" prophet

my God: *but the prophet is a snare of a fowler in all his ways, and hatred in the house of his God.*

9 They have deeply corrupted *themselves*, as in the days of Gibeah: *therefore* he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins.

10 I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the first-ripe in the fig-tree at her first time: *but* they went to Baal-peor, and separated themselves unto *that* shame; and *their* abominations were according as they loved.

11 *As for* Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird, from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception.

12 Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, *that there shall not be a man left*: yea, woe also to them when I depart from them!

13 Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, *is* planted in a pleasant place: but Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer.

14 Give them, O LORD: what wilt thou give? give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.

15 All their wickedness *is* in Gilgal; for there I hated them: for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house, I will love them no more: all their princes *are* revolters.

16 Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried

“prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived that prophet; and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel.” Ezek. xiv. 9. How it was, that God deceived the prophet, is an awful question, to be cautiously touched. It is evident, from the text of Ezekiel, that the prophet himself was highly criminal in the deception which he suffered. It may be, that, for his unworthiness, the spirit of wisdom and understanding was withheld from him, which might have enabled him to discern the true meaning of the allegorical visions presented to his imagination. Or it may be, that, for the guilt of the nation, the prophetic spirit was imparted to those, who wilfully misinterpreted their visions. Thus the vision was true, and the whole falsity was in the error, or the dishonesty, of the prophet. It cannot be conceived, that falsified scenes of futurity could be obtruded by the Holy Spirit on the prophet’s mind. I would observe, that in the case of Ahab, the lying spirit in the mouth of the prophets was not a spirit that lied to them, but a spirit that incited them in effect to lie to the king.

Ver. 8. *The watchman of Ephraim was with my God*] It should be, *is with his God*. The watchman is here evidently a title, by which some faithful prophet is distinguished from the temporizers and seducers. But who in particular is this watchman, thus honourably distinguished, and how is he “with his God?” I think the allusion is to Elijah and his miraculous translation. “Elijah, that faithful watchman, that resolute opposer of idolatry in the reign of Ahab and Jezebel, is now with his God, receiving the reward of his fidelity in the enjoyment of the beatific vision: but the prevaricating prophets, who now are, are the victims of judicial delusion.” The next verse alludes to the history of the young Levite, Judg. xix.

Ver. 10. *I found Israel, &c.*] “After I had miraculously redeemed Israel out of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness, their obedience was as grateful to me as early grapes, or the first ripe figs to a thirsty traveller.” See Micah, vii. 1. Isai. xxviii. 4. Houbigant renders the

last clause of this verse, *Which when they loved they became abominable*: others read, *They went to Baal-peor, and consecrated or devoted themselves unto that shame; and abominations became as their love*.

Ver. 13. *Ephraim, &c.*] Some render these words, *Ephraim was as if I should look upon Tyre, planted in a fair place: but, &c.* Houbigant reads, *That Ephraim, which, when I looked upon him, was as a rock planted in a pleasant place, shall bring forth, &c.*

Ver. 14. *Give them a miscarrying womb*] As a punishment for having inhumanly exposed their infants to death, by sacrificing them to their false gods; or, for having exposed them to the cruelty of the Assyrians, who destroyed them in war. The present passage is strikingly emphatical. But it is to be considered rather as a prediction of what was to happen as a punishment of their crimes, than as an imprecation.

Ver. 15. *Gilgal; for there I hated them*] *For there they became hateful to me, for their flagitious practices;—I will drive them, &c.* That is, “I will no longer consider them “as my family, my children, and servants.” See chap. viii. 1. The first great offence of the Israelites, after their entrance into the holy land, was committed when they were encamped in Gilgal; namely, the sacrilegious peculation of Achan. There, says God, of old was my quarrel with them; and to this, I think, these words allude. Gilgal was the place where the armies of Israel, upon their entering Canaan, first encamped; where Joshua set up the twelve stones, taken by God’s command out of the midst of Jordan, in memorial of the miraculous passage through the river. There the first passover was kept, and the fruits of the promised land first enjoyed. There the captain of the host of Jehovah appeared to Joshua. There the rite of circumcision, which had been omitted during the forty years of the wandering of the people in the wilderness, was renewed. And in the days of the prophet Samuel, Gilgal appears to have been an approved place of worship and burnt-offering. But in later times it appears from Hosea and his cotemporary Amos, that it became a place of great resort for idolatrous purposes. And these are the wickednesses

up, they shall bear no fruit: yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay even the beloved fruit of their womb.

17 My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations.

wickednesses in Gilgal, of which the prophet here speaks. See Bishop Horsley.

Ver. 16. Ephraim is smitten] *Ephraim shall be smitten. Their root shall triumph*: Houbigant. This may be understood as spoken in the prophetic style, wherein a future event is frequently set forth as present.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Israel's guilt and ruin are still the burden of the prophetic word.

1. They are forbidden to rejoice as other people. Though now, perhaps, their affairs might be flourishing, as under Jeroboam; or their harvest plenteous; yet, while their sins were so many, they ought to weep and lament, for judgment hung over their heads. *Note*; The joys of the impenitent sinner are as unseemly as songs of mirth in the mouth of a dying malefactor.

2. Their iniquities, which witnessed against them, should damp their mirth, and bring them to mourning. *For thou hast gone a-whoring from thy God*; committing spiritual adultery with stocks and stones: *thou hast loved a reward upon every corn-floor*; prostituting themselves to their idols, regarding their corn and wine as their gifts, see chap. ii. 5, 12. and offering their tithes of first-fruits at the shrines of their idols, instead of the sanctuary at Jerusalem. *Note*; (1.) They who place their affections on earthly goods, commit the same spiritual adultery, as if they worshipped an idol. (2.) Many spend freely on their lusts, what they would greatly grudge to employ in the service of God.

3. Wrath is gone forth against them for their wickedness. [1.] Their earthly goods shall perish. Their land shall be cursed with barrenness; *the floor and the wine-press shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her*; blasting, mildew, or the ravages of an enemy, shall rob them of their abused blessings, and leave them pining for want: so poor and perishing a possession is every earthly good.

[2.] *They shall not dwell in the Lord's land*: since they have broken the covenant on which they held possession, he, as proprietor, will resume the grant, and send them into a miserable captivity. *They shall return to Egypt*, as fugitives and vagabonds flying from the sword of the Assyrians: *and they shall eat unclean things in Assyria*; led captives thither, and driven through hunger to eat food forbidden by the law, and such as was unfit for men's use. *Note*; They who will not be governed by God's laws, shall not dwell in his land. *The wicked shall be cast into hell, with all the nations that forget God*.

[3.] In their dispersion they should be deprived of the possibility of keeping up any professions of religion, and have neither altar nor sacrifice. *They shall not offer wine-offerings to the Lord*; much less any other oblations: *neither shall their sacrifices be pleasing unto him*; if they had power to offer them, their impenitence and hypocrisy would render them an abomination. *Their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners*; instead of purging them from their sins, *all that eat thereof shall be polluted*, see Lev. xxi. 1. Deut. xxvi. 14. *for their bread for their soul*, either the com-

mon bread, that which fed them, or the *מנחה* *Minchah*, the portion of bread or flour which accompanied the sin-offerings, *shall not come into the house of the Lord*, that glorious temple being destroyed; nor, if it stood, would their oblations be accepted. *What will ye do in the solemn day, and in the day of the feast of the Lord?* the sabbaths, new moons, &c. when, groaning under their burdens, they should neither have sacrifices to slay, nor an altar to offer them upon, nor permission to observe these solemn seasons? *Note*; They who slight and abuse the means of grace that they enjoy, shall know, by dire experience in their loss, the value of the mercies that they disregarded.

[4.] They and their land shall be utterly destroyed. *For so, they are gone, because of destruction, thinking to find refuge in Egypt from the sword of the Assyrians*; but they are mistaken: *Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them*; one of the chief cities whither they fled, and where probably a great part of them died with the pestilence, or through want. *The pleasant places for their silver, nettles shall possess them: thorns shall be in their tabernacles*: so utterly shall all their cities be demolished, and their land be desolate without inhabitant. *Note*; There is no escaping from God: the sinner may fly to him, and find mercy: to attempt to fly from him is madness and must end in misery.

2dly, To awaken their consciences God threatens them,

1. With the speedy execution of his judgments. *The days of visitation are come, the days of recompense are come*; they are surely coming and near, even at the door: *Israel shall know it* by dire experience, and feel the wrath that they would not believe or fear. *Note*; A day of recompense for sinners is at hand, when God will visit upon them all their iniquities.

2. They would then change their sentiments, both concerning the false prophets and the true. They said in the days of their prosperity, concerning the true prophets who warned them of these judgments, *The prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad*; treating their persons with contempt, and their preaching as madness: but now it will appear that the false prophets in whom they trusted, who prophesied to them of peace, were the fools; their pretences to spirituality and inspiration, mere phrenzies of the brain; and their promises of prosperity to a wicked people, direct madness; and to these delusions they were given up, *for the multitude of their iniquity, and for their great hatred*; they hated God, his word, his ministers; and therefore he justly left them to themselves, to fill up the measure of their iniquities, and hasten their own destruction. *The watchman of Ephraim was with my God*; was formerly on the Lord's side, and received directions from him, and should be so now; *but the prophet, the false prophet, is a snare of a Fowler in all his ways*; leading the people wrong by his example and his preaching; *and hatred in the house of his God*: his lies being detected, he becomes execrable even at Beth-el: or, his hatred is

CHAP. X.

Israel is reproved and threatened for their impiety and idolatry.

[Before Christ 740.]

ISRRAEL is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to

bitter against those who cleave to the true worship of God, whom nevertheless the deceiver calls *his God*, and from whom he pretends inspiration. *Note*; (1.) It is no new thing for the true prophets to be branded as fools or madmen. (2.) They who hate the truth are justly given up to strong delusions to believe a lie. (3.) Hatred and contempt of God's faithful ministers will shortly be severely punished.

3. Their iniquities shall be discovered and recompensed. *They have deeply corrupted themselves*; not only the false prophets, but the people in general, *as in the days of Gibeab*, advanced to the highest pitch of lasciviousness, cruelty, and contempt of God; *therefore he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins*; taking exemplary vengeance on them, as of old on that devoted city. *I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness*; took delight in them there, as a traveller who had found such refreshment in a barren place. *I saw your fathers as the first ripe in the fig-tree at her first time*; pleased with their flourishing estate, delighting in them as his people, showering down upon them his blessings, and watching over them with constant care; which aggravated the baseness of their ingratitude, when *they went to Baal-peor*, see Numb. xxv. and *separated themselves unto that shame*; joining in the obscene rites with which this idol was worshipped: *and their abominations were according as they loved*; the daughters of Moab drew them into this abominable idolatry. *Note*; (1.) The sinner's iniquity will certainly sooner or later prove his shame. (2.) When the love of bad women rages in the heart, to please them the infatuated slave stops at no abominations.

3dly, The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; and we see it, in the present instance, fearfully lighting upon the transgressors.

God threatens them with a variety of miseries:

1. Death shall spread its ravages among them, and their children shall perish before their eyes; some dying in the cradle; others carried *from the womb to the grave*; others perishing even *from the conception*. And though some should be spared to grow up, yet, by the sword, the famine, or pestilence, they would be consumed, or carried captives, till *there shall not be a man left*: *yea, woe also to them, when I depart from them*; for this is the heaviest of judgments: the sinner is wretched indeed whom God abandons. At present, indeed, these judgments seemed to be far away; Ephraim, as Tyre, was in prosperity, well fortified, and replenished with inhabitants; but *the murderer*, the Assyrian army, shall devour his children. Already *Ephraim is smitten* with tokens of God's displeasure, and soon shall be utterly destroyed. *Their root is*

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the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images.

2 Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images.

3 For now they shall say, We have no

dried up, they shall bear no fruit, like a tree withered and blasted: *yea, though they bring forth*, a few of them at least, *yet will I slay even the beloved fruit of their womb*; so that when the prophet would intercede for them, he could not but think the barren womb a blessing. *Give them, O Lord: what wilt thou give? Give them a miscarrying womb, and dry breasts*: better far have no children, than only to bring them up for the slaughter. *Note*; (1.) Death makes no distinction, nor pays regard to infants' cries or parents' tears. (2.) The children that parents most doat upon are often snatched from their arms, to teach them the folly and sin of creature-idolatry. (3.) Those who are written childless need not murmur; the crosses that children occasion to us, often more than counterbalance all the comfort of them.

2. In hatred God will cast them off, and cast them out. They had given him indeed abundant provocation to do so. *All their wickedness is in Gilgal*, which was become the chief place of their idolatrous worship; and thence it spread through the land. *There I hated them* for their abominations, profaning that place where once God's tabernacle had been pitched. *For the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house*; from the place where he had settled them in Canaan, the type and figure of his church. *I will love them no more*; at least, for a long while they shall not enjoy any public tokens of his favour and regard. *All their princes are revolters*; they, who should have restrained the people's wickedness were chief in the transgression, and emboldened them in sin by their evil examples. No wonder, therefore, that *my God will cast them away* as reprobate, and thrust them from his presence as abominable, *because they did not hearken unto him*, rejecting the commands of his law, and the warnings of his prophets: *and they shall be wanderers among the nations*; dispersed into all lands, and, like Cain, vagabonds in the earth; as was the case at their first captivity, and is awfully verified in their posterity to this day. *Note*; (1.) Of all miseries none can be greater than to be hated of God; and they who persist in malicious wickedness may assuredly expect it. (2.) It is a distinguishing mercy to the faithful, that, when others are abandoned and forsaken, they can still say, *My God*.

CHAP. X.

Ver. 1. Israel is an empty vine] Houbigant, after most of the ancients, reads, *Israel was a fertile vine, which abounded in fruit*; but, fruitful as it was, it abused the blessings of God to the purposes of sin and idolatry.

Ver. 2. Now shall they be found faulty] *Now shall they undergo their punishment*.

Ver. 3. For now, &c.] *Surely presently shall they say, We have*

king, because we feared not the LORD; what then should a king do to us?

4 They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field.

5 The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Beth-aven: for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof *that* rejoiced on it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it.

6 It shall be also carried unto Assyria *for* a present to king Jarib: Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel.

7 *As for* Samaria, her king is cut off as the foam upon the water.

8 The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us.

9 O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah: there they stood: the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them.

10 *It is* in my desire that I should chastise them; and the people shall be gathered against them, when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows.

have no king, because we feared not the JEHOVAH; and a king, what could he do for us? "After Israel shall be brought into captivity, and shall have no king over their nation, they shall then acknowledge that this misfortune has happened to them through their own fault, and because they have not feared the Lord. They shall acknowledge, that it would profit them nothing to have kings, without having also the protection of God." See Calmet.

Ver. 4. Thus judgment springeth, &c.] "Injustice, being publicly countenanced, encourages the same practices in the dealings of private men." Thus injustice increaseth everywhere, as bitter and poisonous weeds spring up in a field where there is no care taken to destroy them. The word שןִרֹשֶׁבֶת *rosb*, is in some places translated *gall*, and in others *hemlock*; a very bitter and poisonous plant, common in Palestine.

Ver. 5, 6. Shall fear because, &c.] *Have feared, because of the famous calf, &c.* For the people mourn over it: its priests are distressed, because its glory is departed from it. Houbigant; who, for king *Jareb*, reads, *the king the avenger*, as in chap. v. 13. and instead of *Ephraim shall receive shame*,—*Ephraim shall be taken in a snare.*

Ver. 8. The high places.] *The altars, &c.* The latter part of the verse is expressive of the confusion and despair to which the Israelites should be reduced by the destruction of their country. Our Saviour has made use of the same words to denote the extremity of the Jews in their last siege; and St. John in the Revelation, to set forth the terror of the wicked in the day of judgment.

Ver. 9. O Israel, thou hast sinned.] *Even from the days of Gibeah, the sin of Israel flourisheth; from which if they had then abstained, they would not have provoked war in Gibeah, because of wicked men.* Houbigant. The meaning, according to this translation, seems to be, that the Israelites, when they revenged the wickedness of Gibeah, would not have been twice overcome by the Benjamites, before they conquered, if they had not erected so many altars and statues. See Judg. xix. 22, &c. and Houbigant. God gave the Israelites success in that righteous war. It may, however, seem strange, that it should be said that the

"war overtook them not," as if they had not suffered by it; when they were unsuccessful in the first two assaults, and were repulsed by the Benjaminites with a slaughter amounting, in the two days, to 40,000 men. Judges, xx. 21 and 25. But, besides that the confederated tribes were ultimately successful, this loss, in proportion to their whole embattled force, which consisted of 400,000 men (ver. 2.), was nothing in comparison with that of the tribe of Benjamin, which was all but cut off. For of their force, which was 26,700, no more than 1600 survived the business of the third day, in which the town of Gibeah was taken and destroyed. And of this remnant all seem to have been cut off afterwards, except the 600 men that fortified themselves upon the rock Rimmon; so that of the whole tribe not one forty-fourth part was left.

Ver. 10. It is in my desire, &c.] Houbigant renders it, *I will come and chastise them: the nations shall assemble against them, when I shall chastise them for their two transgressions;* meaning the two calves of Dan and Beth-el.

In their two furrows.] Those who adopt these words in their literal sense seem to agree, that the image which the clause presents is that of a pair of heifers yoked to the plough; which I take to be erroneous. For the furrows are two: *when they shall bind themselves, or shall be bound to or upon their two furrows.* But a plough, though dragged by a pair of heifers, makes but one furrow at a time; and this is the one furrow of both heifers. If *furrows* be the true sense of the word מַחְרָשׁ *moth*, I am inclined to think the being bound, or confined, to their two furrows may be a proverbial expression, not much unlike the more homely proverb of our own language, of "an ass between two bundles of hay;" describing the situation of a person fluctuating in his choice between two things, of which he must choose one. In like manner, the situation of extreme difficulty to which the Israelites were reduced under their latter kings, without any human means of relief, but in the choice of one of the two alliances, between which they were ever fluctuating, that of Assyria and that of Egypt, may be represented under the image of an animal tethered by a short rope, in such a manner that its utmost liberty of feeding is but the breadth of a single ridge between two furrows.

11 And Ephraim is as an heifer that is taught, and loveth to tread out the corn; but I passed over upon her fair neck: I will make Ephraim to ride; Judah shall plow, and Jacob shall break his clods.

12 Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow-ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.

13 Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of

lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men.

14 Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people, and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled, as Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel in the day of battle: the mother was dashed in pieces upon her children.

15 So shall Beth-el do unto you because of your great wickedness: in a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off.

furrows, one on the one side, one on the other. The only objection of which I am aware, to this interpretation of the image, is, that pasture-grounds are not usually laid down in ridge and furrow, and animals are not usually tethered to feed in corn-land.

But if the original word be taken to signify *iniquities*, or *faults*, the passage may be brought to the same general meaning, dismissing the image of a tethered animal, and rendering—*when they are tied to their two faults*, or, with the Syriac,—*their two follies*. The two alliances already mentioned might be called the two faults of the people, as both were repeatedly reprobated by the prophets, and yet the people were always courting the one or the other of them. Or they might be called their two *follies*: for they never formed the one or the other, but they experienced the folly of the measure. Their ally, whichever of the two they chose, always proved a treacherous friend; and yet the name of an alliance with one always drew down the resentment and vengeance of the rival power. They were tied to these two faults, or two follies, when, by God's just desertion of them, they were cut off from all prospect of any better aid, than one or the other of these alliances might offer to their hopes, and felt themselves obliged to make a choice.

Ver. 11. *And Ephraim, &c.*] Houbigant renders the verse thus, *Ephraim is a heifer, accustomed to tread out the corn, which she loves; but I will submit her neck to the yoke: I will tame Ephraim. Judah shall plough for himself; Jacob for himself shall break up the ground; as much as to say, Ephraim loves treading out the corn, as opposed to "ploughing;" that is to say, loves the booty not gained by his own labour; or to tread out, and freely eat of the corn, which is not its own; because the mouth of the ox which treadeth out the corn was not bound up. Israel very frequently made great depredations upon Judah: and as this heifer loved to tread out the corn, and not to plough, it is therefore added, that he should be made to plough;—put under the yoke; namely, that of the Assyrians. What is added, Judah and Jacob shall plough for themselves, means that Judah shall not now plough for Israel, but for himself; as Israel shall no more make depredations upon him.*

Ver. 12. *Sow to yourselves in righteousness*] "Employ yourselves in works of justice and charity; and then, through the mercy of JEHOVAH, you may still hope to reap the fruits of your repentance and reformation." Instead of *Reap in mercy*, Houbigant reads, *Reap in bene-*

volence; leaving handfuls for the poor and the widow; as your law commands." And instead of, *For it is time to seek the Lord*, he reads, *And seek you the Lord again and again: seek him with earnest and anxious desire.* Some suppose that this alludes to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the true teacher of righteousness, and the alone source of our justification and of our graces. See *Isai. xlv. 8.*

Ver. 13. *Because thou didst trust, &c.*] Houbigant begins the 14th verse with this clause: *Because thou didst trust, &c. Therefore, &c.* And after Grotius, he reads, *As Shalman was spoiled by the hand of Jerub-baal [or Gideon] in the day of battle; the mother shall be dashed in pieces with her children.* The prophet seems to allude to the war of Gideon against *Salmana*, general of the Midianites, from whom the city here spoken of was called *Shalman*. But others suppose that the allusion is to the destruction of *Beth-arbel*, a city of Armenia, by *Salmaneser*, here called *Shalman*.

Ver. 15. *So shall Beth-el do unto you*] "This is the fruit of your worshipping the golden calves at Beth-el. As it has happened to the city above mentioned, so shall it happen to you, because of your iniquities." Houbigant reads the verse, after the LXX, *So shall it be done unto you, O house of Israel, for the wickedness of your counsels; and with the Vulgate he ends the chapter here: but ours seems the more proper division.*

In a morning, &c.] *As the morning is brought to nothing, to nothing shall the king of Israel be brought.* The sudden and total destruction of the monarchy of the ten tribes is compared to the sudden and total extinction of the beauties of the dawn in the sky, by the instantaneous diffusion of the solar light; by which the ruddy streaks in the East, the glow of orange-coloured light upon the horizon, are at once obliterated, absorbed, and lost in the colourless light of day. The change is sudden even in these climates; it is much more sudden in the tropical; and in all it is one of the most complete that Nature presents.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Still the sins of the people, and the judgments of God, are the burden of the prophecy.

1. Their sins are charged upon them.

[1.] They are destitute of all goodness. *Israel is an empty vine, of no profit to the owner: he bringeth forth fruit unto himself; he thinks not of advancing God's glory, but his own; and his earthly good things are not spent in God's service, but consumed on his lusts, or in the worship of*

C H A P. XI.

The ingratitude of Israel unto God for his benefits: their judgment. God's mercy towards them.

[Before Christ 740.]

WHEN Israel *was* a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

idols; and he is therefore an *empty vine*, being thus impoverished and exhausted*.

[2.] They are devoted to idolatry. *According to the multitude of his fruit*, as his riches increased, *he hath increased the altars*, &c. thus turning God's gifts against him, and abusing his blessings to the vilest purposes. *Note*; We too often see an increase of wealth abused to the increase of wickedness, instead of being employed as a more enlarged opportunity put into men's hands of serving God's cause, and doing good in their generation.

[3.] *Their heart is divided*; among themselves factions rage, and sects dispute about the preference of idols; or rather, their heart is divided between God and the calves. *Now shall they be found faulty*, this halting between both being highly criminal, for a divided heart God abhors; or *they shall be desolated* with his judgments.

[4.] *They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant*; perjured and profane, making no conscience of oaths or leagues; and, on the very seat of judgment, injustice and oppression sat enthroned. *Thus judgment*, which should have been administered with impartiality as a medicine, through false witnesses, and a corrupt magistracy, *springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field*; baleful and poisonous, perverted to the greater loss or ruin of the injured: and God will visit for these things, and avenge the quarrel of those who are oppressed with wrong.

2. Their punishments are denounced.

[1.] *They shall say, We have no king*; as bad as none, when justice was so ill administered; or they were really without a king, through the frequent assassinations of their monarchs; or having none able to protect them from their enemies; or, as at the last, when they and their king together were led captives into Assyria: *because we feared not the Lord*, which was the source of all their miseries; *what then should a king do to us?* If they had one, he could afford them no protection from the judgments of the eternal King whom they had provoked. *As for Samaria*, the metropolis of Israel, *her king is cut off as the foam upon the water*. In prophetic language, what shall be is spoken of as already done; Hoshea, the last king, being doomed to fall, weak as the froth which flies on the surface, and easily broken, as the bubbles, before the Assyrian army.

[2.] Their idols shall be destroyed, and be as little able to help them as their king. *He shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images*; the Assyrian monarch shall do it, the rod of God's indignation. *The inhabitants of Samaria*

2 *As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.*

3 I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them.

4 I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they

shall fear because of the calves of Beth-aven; for them, lest they should be seized by the enemy; or for themselves, as if, now that they were taken, the land would be left defenceless; *for the people thereof shall mourn over it*; of Beth-aven, or the worshippers of the calves in general shall lament their loss, *and the priests thereof that rejoiced on it*; who shall grieve, as particularly interested *for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it*, and no more surrounded with crowds of worshippers; or the glory of Beth-aven is now departed, their calf being gone. *It shall also be carried unto Assyria for a present to king Jareb*, as a trophy of victory over Samaria and her gods. *Ephraim shall receive shame*, when they see their idols demolished, and their folly in trusting them manifested: *and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel*, in paying divine worship to such vanities. *The high places also of Aven, of iniquity, the scenes where their idolatries were committed, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed; the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars*, being left in ruins, and unfrequented; and in their bitter distress *they, the people who were wont to worship there, shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us*; as if seeking even under them a covert from their miseries, and desiring to be hidden from the wrath of God. *Note*; (1.) When we make any creature our idol, God justly breaks it down, and leaves us to mourn our folly. (2.) When the day of vengeance comes, in vain does the sinner cry to rocks and mountains to hide him from the wrath of the Lamb.

2dly, The prophet,

1. Reminds them of their wickedness, committed in a constant series from the days of their predecessors. *From the days of Gibeah*, when the Levite's concubine was so atrociously abused, *thou hast sinned*, continued in the practice of such abominations; or, *more than the day of Gibeah*, exceeding them in iniquity: *there they stood*, with daring effrontery, on their defence. *The battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them*: in the first two engagements they were victorious, and at last six hundred men made their escape (see another interpretation in the Critical Notes): but as the sin of Israel now exceeded theirs, the battle should overtake them, notwithstanding their present prosperity in iniquity.

2. God will visit them. *It is in my desire that I should chastise them*; on this he determined; *and the people shall be gathered against them*, as Israel was of old against Benjamin; *when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows*, fortified with a double entrenchment: or, *they shall bind them*; their enemies shall yoke them as oxen, to plough their ground: or, *when I shall bind them for their two transgressions*; their forsaking God for idols, and their corporal and spiritual adultery.

* The reader will be pleased to recollect, that in my Reflections I almost always consider the text according to our public English Version.

that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them.

5 ¶ He shall not return into the land of

Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return.

6 And the sword shall abide on his cities,

tery. *And Ephraim is as an heifer that is taught to plough, and bear the yoke, to submit to God's commands; but with reluctance yielded her neck; and loveth rather to tread out the corn, where she can eat to the full, than labour in the furrows of obedience: but I passed over upon her fair neck; put a yoke upon it. I will make Ephraim to ride, or cause to ride on Ephraim;* the Assyrians shall have dominion over them. *Judah shall plough, and Jacob shall break his clods;* being brought into bondage by their conquerors. Some give a very different sense of the words, as speaking the kind care of God in teaching his penitent returning people, and the gentle methods that he took to engage their obedience; as one strokes the heifer's neck to encourage her, and bring her to the yoke. He laid then his institutions upon them, and set them to their work, that they might bring forth fruit abundantly to his glory and their own comfort. And to this sense the following words seem applicable; which contain,

3. An exhortation to righteousness, prayer, and repentance. *Sow to yourselves in righteousness; walk in all holy conversation and godliness, in the practice of every good word and work, which will bring their own reward: reap in mercy;* spiritual and also everlasting life being to the faithful the reward, not of debt, but of grace; *break up your fallow ground;* for such is the heart of man; being naturally hard, unprofitable for any good fruit, overrun with the briars and thorns of corrupt affections, and needs to be broken up by an humbling conviction of our sinfulness, guilt, and misery, that the seed of divine grace may spread and grow, and bring forth abundantly: *for it is time to seek the Lord,* whose blessing alone can prosper the seed sown, *till he come and rain righteousness upon you;* give us that Spirit of righteousness, without whom we have no power to produce it. *Ye have ploughed wickedness;* toiled hard in the service of sin; and an Egyptian talk-master had they found it. *Ye have reaped iniquity;* a plenteous harvest of evil, both of guilt and punishment: *ye have eaten the fruit of lies;* disappointed in their expectations, and finding nothing of that sweetness and satisfaction which they promised themselves; *because thou didst trust in thy way,* on idol confidences, or heathen alliances; and *in the multitude of thy mighty men;* their own armies and garrisons, which were poor defences against the wrath of God, which they had provoked; and thus will all the confidences and comforts of the sinner assuredly disappoint his hopes.

4. An utter destruction awaits them. *Therefore, because of their sins and vain confidences, shall a tumult arise among thy people, from insurrections at home, and the invasion of the Assyrian army: and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled,* so that they should find no place of refuge; as *Shalman* (the same probably as Salmaneser) *spoiled Beth-arbel in the day of battle;* a well-known transaction in that day, where the place was sacked, the people most inhumanly massacred; *the mother was dashed in pieces upon her children;* and such would be their case; *so shall Beth-el do*

unto you, because of your great wickedness; particularly their idolatry committed at Beth-el, which would bring down the like fearful vengeance upon them. Or, *so will he do unto you, O Bethel;* commit the same ravages in this chief seat of idolatry. *In a morning shall the king of Israel be utterly cut off;* certainly and speedily as the morning returns; or, when they think the day of prosperity and liberty is dawning upon them, then shall their king Hoshea be cut off, and all the nation perish with him. *Note;* Whatever miseries we feel or fear, whether national or personal, respecting our bodies or our souls, they all spring from the same cause; sin, sin is the deadly root of bitterness.

CHAP. XI.

Ver. 1. When Israel was a child, &c.] Israel is my son: I have loved him as a son, and delivered him from Egypt. "I have regarded him as my child; I have taken the same care of him as a father does of a son." The prophet seems to allude to the words of Moses, Exod. iv. 22, 23. St. Matthew has quoted this passage of Hosea, and applied it to the return of our Saviour from Egypt. He says, that then these words of the prophet were fulfilled; I have called my son out of Egypt. The departure of the Jews from that country was only a figure of that of the Saviour; and the name of the first-born, which the Scripture on that occasion gives to Israel, was literally and exactly verified only in the person of Jesus Christ. Eusebius, however, and several other ancient writers, are of opinion, that St. Matthew did not take this passage from Hosea, but from the words of Balaam, Numb. xxiv. 8. But we shall say more concerning this matter on Matt. ii. 15.

Ver. 2. As they called them] As I called them, so they went from me. Houbigant.

Graven images] We read frequently, in our English bibles, of graven images, and of molten images: and the words are become so familiar, as names of idolatrous images, that although they are not well chosen to express the Hebrew names, it seems not advisable to change them for others which might more exactly correspond with the original.

The graven image was not a thing wrought in metal by the tool of the workman whom we should now call an engraver; nor was the molten image an image made of metal, or any other substance melted, and shaped in a mould. In fact, the graven image and the molten image are the same thing, under different names. The images of the ancient idolaters were first cut out of wood, by the carpenter, as is very evident from the prophet Isaiah. This figure of wood was overlaid with plates either of gold or silver, or, sometimes perhaps, of an inferior metal. And in this finished state it was called a graven image (that is to say, a carved image), in reference to the inner solid figure of wood, and a molten (that is to say, an overlaid, or covered) image, in reference to the outer metalline case or covering. And sometimes both epithets are applied to it at once. *I will cut off the graven and molten image;* Nah. i. 14.

and shall consume his branches, and devour *them*, because of their own counsels.

7 And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt *him*.

8 ¶ How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? *how* shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? *how* shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me,

my repentings are kindled together.

9 I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I *am* God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city.

10 They shall walk after the LORD: he shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west.

Again, *What profiteth the graven and molten image?* Hab. ii. 18. The English word *molten* conveys a notion of melting, or fusion. But this is not the case with the Hebrew word *שֶׁפֶל* *sefel*, for which it is given. The Hebrew word signifies generally to overspread, or cover all over, in whatever manner, according to the different subject, the overspreading or covering be effected; whether by pouring forth a substance in fusion, or by spreading a cloth over or before, or by hammering on metalline plates. It is on account of this metalline case, that we find a foundry employed to make a graven image, Judg. xvii. 3. and that we read in Isaiah of a workman that *melteth a graven image*; Is. xl. 19.: and in another place we find the question, *who hath molten a graven image?* Is. xlv. 10. In these two passages the words should be *overlayeth*, and *overlaid*.

Ver. 3. *Healed them*] *Preserved them*.

Ver. 4. *I drew them with cords of a man*] “I employed, to gain their affection, all the motives which could influence a heart not insensible to love. They cannot complain that I treated them as animals, or as slaves; that I commanded them with rigour, or constrained them by force. I treated them as reasonable men, and as a father treats his children.” Houbigant concludes the verse with the words, *Take on their jaws*; and begins the fifth thus; *I drew him gently unto me: he shall not, &c.*

Ver. 7. *My people, &c.*] *My people delay returning to me: though they have been called upwards, yet none at all would raise himself up.*

Ver. 8. *How shall I give thee up? &c.*] The mercy of the Almighty is here pathetically represented as contending with his justice; to shew that he does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men. *Admah* and *Zeboim* were two cities involved in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. We may read, *How shall I deliver thee up, Israel?* and instead of *repentings*—*relentings*.

Ver. 9. *And I will not enter into the city*] *And I will not come as an enemy*. Houbigant renders it, *Nor am I come speedily to depart from thee*: and he supposes that the contrast in this and the former clause is between an inhabitant and a passing traveller. Bishop Lowth renders it, after St. Jerome, *Though I inhabit not cities*: “I am not one of those who dwell in cities, who live according to human laws; who reckon cruelty to be justice.” Castalio follows St. Jerome. This sentence is parallel and synonymous to *I am not a man*. The future *אָבָה* *avo*, has a frequentative power: see Pf. xxii. 3. 8. *I am not used to*

enter, or dwell; I am no inhabitant of a city. There is a very elegant contrast in each member of the sentence: *I am God, and not man*; there is an increase of the sense in the following sentence, and the contrast is varied: “I am thy God, dwelling with thee; but in a peculiar and extraordinary manner, no way similar to that of man-kind.” Nothing can be more plain and elegant.

Ver. 10. *They shall walk, &c.*] *It shall come to pass, that they shall follow the Lord, when he shall roar like a lion; for he shall roar, and the fishes of the sea shall tremble*. Houbigant. See Ezek. xxxviii. 20. *By the fishes of the sea*, are supposed to be meant the people of Egypt and Babylon. But the following seems a better and more consistent translation:—*They shall walk after the Lord, who shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall come fluttering from the west*. Ver. 11. *They shall come fluttering as a bird, &c.*

The children] It is remarkable, that the expression is neither *their children*, nor *my children*, but simply *the children*. The first would limit the discourse to the natural Israel exclusively; the second would be nearly of the same effect, as it would express such as were already children at the time of the roaring. But the term *the children*, put nakedly, without either of these epithets, expresses those who were neither of the natural Israel, nor children, that is, worshippers, of the true God, at the time of the roaring, but were roused by that sound, and then became children, that is to say, the adopted children, by natural extraction Gentiles. This and the next verse contain indeed a wonderful prophecy of the promulgation and progress of the Gospel, and the restoration of the race of Israel. The first clause of this 10th verse states generally, that they will return to the Lord. In what follows, the circumstances and progress of the business are described. First, *Jehovah will roar*—the roaring is unquestionably the sound of the Gospel. *Jehovah himself shall roar*—the sound shall begin to be uttered by the voice of the incarnate God himself. The first effect shall be, *children shall come fluttering from the west*; a new race of children—converts of the Gentiles; chiefly from the western quarters of the world, or what the Scriptures call the west; for no part, I think, of Asia Minor, Syria or Palestine, is reckoned a part of the east in the language of the Old Testament. Afterwards the natural Israel shall hurry from all the regions of their dispersion, and be settled in their own dwellings.

It is to be observed, that the roaring is mentioned twice. It will be most consistent with the style of the prophets, to take

11 They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will place them in their houses, saith the LORD.

12 ¶ Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints.

take this as two roarings; and to refer the hurrying of the children from the west to the first; the hurrying from Egypt and Assyria to the second. The times of the two roarings are the first and second advent. The first brought children from the west; the renewed preaching of the Gospel, at the second, will bring home the Jews. And perhaps this second founding of the Gospel may be more remarkable even than the first, the roaring of Jehovah in person.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, God puts the people of Israel in mind,

i. Of the *grace* and mercy that he had shewn them. *When Israel was a child, then I loved him*, in their weak and helpless state, when first God took them for a people; and called my son out of Egypt, from that house of their prison: and prophetically this declares what should be the case with Christ, God's incarnate Son, to whom, Matt. ii. 15. the words are expressly applied, and in and through whom every faithful soul has obtained a deliverance from the bondage of guilt and corruption, infinitely more intolerable than that of Egypt. *I taught Ephraim also to go*, with all the tenderness and care of the fondest mother; *taking them by their arms*; giving them his holy law to direct them, and by a pillar and cloud guiding their marches in the trackless wilderness. And thus God still upholds his believing people, teaching them by his word and spirit; carrying them through their trials and temptations, and strengthening their souls for his work and service. *I healed them of their diseases and plagues*; as he doth the souls of genuine penitents, when wounded by sin, or when they have suffered by spiritual decays. *I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love*; by every endearing motive, and the powerfully constraining influence of his love shed abroad in their hearts, by which God still draws every penitent sinner to come unto him. *I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws*; as the husbandman unmuzzles the ox, or looses the yoke from its neck, so had God delivered them from the servitude of Egypt, as he doth his believing people from the bondage of corruption: and *I laid meat unto them*; the manna and quails wherewith he fed them in the wilderness, the emblems of the better spiritual bread which cometh down from heaven, with which God strengthens and comforts his faithful people in their way through this desert world to the land of eternal rest.

2. Of the base *ingratitude* with which they had requited him. *As they*, the prophets of the Lord, *called them to their duty*, and to return from their sinful backslidings; *so they went from them*: the more importunately they were solicited, the more obstinate and refractory they grew. *They sacrificed unto Baalim, and burnt incense to graven images*, the abominable thing against which they were so particularly warned. All God's kindness was thrown away upon them: *they knew not that I healed them*, but ascribe to their

idols all their mercies; and my people are bent to backsliding from me; both under a constant propensity to depart from him, and wilfully set upon their abominations, though nationally his people, which relation aggravated their guilt exceedingly. *They refused to return*; whether courted or threatened, they persisted in evil: though they called them to the Most High, to leave their idols, and return to the worship of the true God, none at all would exalt him, give him the glory due unto his name; or lift up their prayers to him for mercy, or their hearts from earthly vanities to high and heavenly things. Note; Much pains are often spent to little purpose by God's faithful ministers; yet, though sinners will not hear, God is thereby glorified in leaving them without excuse.

3. Heavy wrath is denounced against them. *He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king*, whose yoke would be so much heavier, that they would wish rather for the task-masters of Egypt again: or so straitly should they be besieged, or so far carried away captives, that they should not be able to send ambassadors to Egypt for assistance. *And the sword shall abide on his cities*; the destruction shall be long continued, as well as universal; and shall consume his branches, and devour them; the villages and country around, or the inhabitants thereof; because of their own counsels, which were their ruin. Note; Sinners have none to blame but themselves: they choose those ways which necessarily lead to their own perdition.

2dly, We have,

1. The reluctance that a gracious God expresses in giving up the once chosen people of Israel to ruin. *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?* &c. Justice might well plead for their total excision, and that, like the cities which were consumed with fire, Deut. xxix. 23. Israel deserved to be given up to the same terrible vengeance; but mercy pleads for some mitigation or respite, if not for pardon; and God, as a father, with bowels of tenderest compassion, appears most backward to ruin even this rebellious son; and mercy prevails; *mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together*. And most astonishing do these compassions of our God appear! Oh, that the ungrateful sinner would for a moment pause, and think of them! Surely they must soften his obdurate heart.

2. God's determination to shew them some mercy. *I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger*, in blotting out their name from under heaven; *I will not return to destroy Ephraim*; though I visit them in wrath, *I will not enter into the city*: though Jerusalem, Samaria, and the other cities, lie waste for a time, their desolations shall not be perpetual, as those of Admah and Zeboim: *for I am God, and not man*, (human compassions, indeed, would long ago have failed,) *the holy One in the midst of thee*. Christ is his faithful people's protector: for his sake, who stands in the midst of them to plead for them, they are spared; and, though they deserve punishment, through him they obtain mercy.

They

C H A P. XII.

A reproof of Ephraim, Judah, and Jacob. By former favours he exhorteth to repentance. Ephraim's sins provoke God.

[Before Christ 725.]

EPHRAIM feedeth on wind, and fol-
loweth after the east wind: he daily
increaseth lies and desolation; and they do
make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil
is carried into Egypt.

2 The LORD hath also a controversy with

They shall walk after the Lord, the Messiah their Saviour, their leader and commander, the Captain of their Salvation, receiving an application of the great and precious promises of his Gospel, and yielding to be saved by grace. He shall roar like a lion; his word shall be heard far and near: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west; the returning penitents, whose hearts shall be deeply affected with the preaching of the Gospel: and this respects the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, the Gospel having chiefly spread that way hitherto. They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria, flying swiftly, as the timorous dove when pursued by a bird of prey, to the covert of redeeming grace: and I will place them in their houses, saith the Lord; in the church of God below; and all those who persevere to the end in faith and love, in the eternal mansions of glory above. Note; (1.) When we are most discouraged with the sense of our own deserts, we should still remember with whom we have to do: he is God, and not man; and as his majesty is, so is his mercy. (2.) The trembling of the sinner is usually the first symptom of his return to God. (3.) When Christ is our captain, and we walk after him, we cannot fail of victory over every foe.

3. A heavy complaint still lies against *Ephraim*: he *compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit.* This seems to be a new discourse, and most properly should begin the next chapter. Their services were hypocritical, and their profession deceitful, and therefore an abhorrence in the sight of the heart-searching God.

4. Judah is highly commended: *Judah yet ruleth with God.* The two tribes submitted in some measure to that *Theocracy* which God had established among them, and their kings ruled according to God's law, and received their directions from him in their emergencies; which was their truest honour and highest dignity: *and he is faithful with the saints, cleaving to the worship of the sanctuary, and treading in the steps of their pious progenitors; and, while they do so, they may assuredly expect that God will be faithful to his promises, and preserve them to his everlasting kingdom.* Note; (1.) They who perseveringly make God their king shall be exalted to reign with him. (2.) The faithful will be rewarded with mansions in glory, when the hypocrite and unbeliever shall receive their portion in everlasting burnings.

C H A P. XII.

Ver. 1. Lies and desolation] Perfidiousness and violence. Houbigant reads the next clause, They make a covenant with

Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him.

3 ¶ He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God:

4 Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him *in* Beth-el, and there he spake with us;

the Assyrians, whilst in the mean time oil is carried into Egypt. That is, "While they were in covenant with the Assyrians, they were secretly and perfidiously seeking an alliance with the Egyptians." Egypt was not a country remarkable for oil of olives, which yet is one great necessary of life in the eastern countries, being very much used there for food. At the same time oil was wanted for lights there, which must not only have been necessarily very numerous in so populous a country; but was also used by the ancient Egyptians in great quantities for illuminations, which are still very frequent in those countries; and especially in those months when the Nile overflows, of which Maillet in his Letters gives a most amusing description, and which we may suppose obtained sometimes, more or less, even in the prophetic times. To which also we may add, the custom which obtains universally there, of keeping lamps burning during the night, in all the apartments of a house that are kept in use; which occasions Maillet to say, that perhaps there is no country in the world where so much oil is consumed as in Egypt. This great consumption of oil occasioned the Egyptians anciently to extract it from other vegetables, as well as olives; and still occasions them to do so. One plant in particular, called *cirika*, which greatly resembles wild *succory*, furnishes them with a good deal of oil; but as its smell is very disagreeable, and its light not so clear as that of olive oil, it is not burnt by people of condition, or those who would be thought such. Syria, on the contrary, was a land of oil; and it was produced in great quantities in that part which the Jews inhabited. It is no wonder then, that when the Jews wanted to pay their court to the Egyptians, they sent them the present of oil, with which the prophet here upbraids them. It was what their country produced in great abundance, and it was highly acceptable in Egypt. See the *Observations*, p. 387.

Ver. 4. Yea, he had power over the angel, &c.] Concerning this translation, see the notes on Gen. xxxii. Houbigant reads the last clause of the verse, And there he spake with him: even Jehovah God of Hosts, ver. 5: therefore the angel with whom Jacob wrestled—the angel of the covenant—is Jehovah God of Hosts.

He wept] He had wept. Of weeping, Archbishop Newcome says, "we read nothing in Gen. xxxii." Certainly we read nothing of Jacob's weeping upon the occasion of the wrestling or colloquation at Peniel. But as the weeping and supplicating stand connected here with the finding of God at Beth-el, it is evident that this weeping and supplicating

5 Even the Lord GOD of Hosts; the LORD is his memorial.

6 Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually.

7 ¶ *He is a merchant, the balances of deceit*

are in his hand: he loveth to oppress.

8 And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin.

9 And I *that am* the LORD thy God from

uplicating were previous to any meeting with God at Beth-el; consequently, previous to Jacob's first meeting with God at Beth-el. Now, previous to the first meeting, there was weeping as well as supplicating; for we read, that previous to that meeting Jacob was *in distress*, and that God answered him in that distress: Gen. xxxv. 3. I allow therefore that the weeping and entreaty, which procured the very extraordinary favour of God's appearance to Jacob in the dream at Beth-el, (Gen. xxviii.) are mentioned here, as part of the means by which he obtained that strength which enabled him to prevail over the angel. The remark of Luther, upon this extraordinary conflict between Jacob and the glorious personage called the angel, is so excellent, that I cannot but subjoin a translation of it here:—

“Various have been the sentiments of learned men concerning this wrestling or colluctation of Jacob. But the history evidently shews, that Jacob was apparently brought to the utmost hazard of his life, and that all the powers of his body were forcibly assailed by his unknown antagonist. He therefore called forth the whole strength of every part of his frame against his opponent, in order to defend his life. Yea, he not only wrestled with all the powers of his body; but his faith was brought into the fullest exercise: he was above all things comforted and supported in this instant peril, from the certainty that he was commanded by Jehovah to return into the land of Canaan. In the next place, with his whole heart he laid hold of the promise given to him in Beth-el by Jehovah, in which protection was most indubitably promised. While therefore he thus agonized, and was so strongly opposed by his unknown antagonist, although he summoned all his bodily powers to his assistance, he still more mightily contended with the hand of faith, eyeing the promise, and confidently resting upon God according to his word, to be preserved and delivered from this imminent danger. Thus by faith he conquered God.”

Ver. 5. *The Lord is his memorial*] The person, of whom it is here said, that the name *Lord* or JEHOVAH is his memorial, is no other than he whom the patriarch found at Beth-el, who there spake with the Israelites in the loins of their progenitor. He, whom the patriarch found at Beth-el, who there, in that manner, spake with the Israelites, was, by the tenor of the context, the antagonist with whom Jacob was afterwards matched at Peniel. The antagonist, with whom he was matched at Peniel, wrestled with the Patriarch, as we read in the book of Genesis, (chap. xxxii. 24.) in the human form. The conflict was no sooner ended, than the patriarch acknowledged his antagonist as God, Gen. xxxii. 30. The holy prophet first calls him angel, מלאך malaak, ver. 4. and after mention of the wrestling or colluctation, and of the meeting and conference at Beth-el, says, (ver. 5.) that he, whom he had

called angel, was JEHOVAH God of Hosts. And to make the assertion of this person's godhead, if possible, still more unequivocal, he adds, that to him belonged, as his appropriate memorial, that name, which is declarative of the very essence of the godhead. This *Man* therefore of the book of Genesis, this *Angel* of Hosea, who wrestled with Jacob, could be no other than the JEHOVAH-ANGEL, of whom we so often read in the English Bible, under the name of the *Angel of the Lord*: a phrase of an unfortunate structure, and so ill-conformed to the original, that it is to be feared, it has led many into the error of conceiving of the Lord as one person, and of the Angel as another. The word of the Hebrew, ill rendered, *the Lord*, is not, like the English word, an appellative, expressing rank, or condition; but it is the proper name JEHOVAH. And this proper name Jehovah is not, in the Hebrew, a genitive after the noun substantive *Angel*, as the English represents it; but the words *Jehovah* and *Angel*, are two nouns substantive in apposition, both speaking of the same person; the one, by the appropriate name of the essence; the other, by a title of office. *Jehovah-Angel* would be a better rendering. The JEHOVAH-ANGEL of the Old Testament is no other than He, who, in the fulness of time, “was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary.”

Ver. 6. *Therefore turn thou, &c.*] From these words we learn on what account that which is said concerning Jacob, and concerning God, is spoken; and how it so concerned the Israelites of Hosea's time, as that this exhortation should be thence inferred to them. With respect to the things which are mentioned concerning Jacob, they were manifestly so ordered by God, as to be a sign to his sons or posterity after him, and more evidently to be fulfilled in them than in him. What was done by him, shews what ought to have been done by them, that they might approve themselves to be his genuine offspring. What was done or spoken by God, and promised to Jacob, shews what God would certainly do for them, and make good to them, if they so approved themselves; which if they did not, they shewed themselves to be degenerate from him, and to be ungrateful to God; unmindful of his goodness to Jacob, and in him to them: and if they did not enjoy or were deprived of those blessings to him, and in him to them promised, it was through their own fault; not through any failure on God's part; who still continued to be the mighty God of Jacob, able and willing to bless all those who strive with him for a blessing. See Pocke.

Ver. 7. *He is a merchant, &c.*] *Canaan holds the balances of deceit in his hands*; Ephraim is so called, because he imitates the practice of fraudulent merchants.

Ver. 8. *In all my labours, &c.*] *My labours shall be my own, nor shall the iniquity be found out, wherein I have sinned.* Houbigant.

Ver. 9. *And I—will yet make, &c.*] *I, the Lord thy God, brought*

the land of Egypt will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feasts.

10 I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets.

11 *Is there iniquity in Gilead?* surely they are vanity: they sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal; yea, their altars *are* as heaps in the furrows of the fields.

brought thee out of the land of Egypt, till I gave thee such a habitation in tents as thou hast in the days of the solemn feast; meaning that of tabernacles.

Ver. 10. I have also spoken by the prophets] Here are three species of prophecy distinctly mentioned: *first*, immediate suggestion or inspiration, when God dictates the very words which the prophet is to deliver. *Secondly*, vision, or a representation made of external objects to the imagination, in as lively a manner as if they were conveyed to the senses: and *thirdly*, parables and apt resemblances. The Lord is here recounting some of the distinguished acts of his sovereign mercy to the Israelites, in order to shew their ingratitude more fully.

Ver. 11. Is there iniquity, &c.] *If there was a vain religion in Gilead, certainly they are vain in Gilgal: They sacrifice bullocks; therefore their altars shall be, &c.* Houbigant. The tribes beyond Jordan, in one of which was Gilead, were now subdued by Tiglath-Pileser, when the prophet delivered this. He therefore denounces that such should be the case of Gilgal also, where was the same vain and idolatrous worship, on this side of Jordan.

Ver. 12. And for a wife he kept sheep] *And for a wife was he detained.* Houbigant.

Ver. 14. Ephraim provoked him, &c.] *Ephraim hath provoked the extreme anger. His blood shall be sprinkled upon him; and his reproach, &c.* Houbigant.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. The folly of Ephraim; he feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east-wind, entertaining fallacious hopes, and courting his idols, or his heathen neighbours, for assistance; a labour as vain as pursuing the wind: he daily increaseth lies and desolation, his strange gods and foreign alliances, which will prove a lie in his right hand, and bring ruin upon him; and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians, 2 Kings, xv. 19. thinking to secure their safety thereby; and oil is carried into Egypt to purchase their favour and help; but neither shall be of any service to them, but will help to impoverish them, and hasten their destruction. *Note;* They who trust on creature-confidences will find them not only deceitful but ruinous.

2. The Lord hath also a controversy with Judah, who now began to degenerate and fall into idolatry, and therefore he will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him, discovering his sins and taking vengeance for them.

3. Their degeneracy from the piety of their forefathers

12 And Jacob fled into the country of Syria, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept *sheep*.

13 And by a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved.

14 Ephraim provoked *him* to anger most bitterly: therefore shall he leave his blood upon him, and his reproach shall his Lord return unto him.

was a great aggravation of their guilt. *He, Jacob, took his brother by the heel*, so soon did he begin to struggle for the birthright, while they had bowed down their necks to idols, and subjected themselves to the heathen; and by his strength he had power with God, yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed, when he wrestled with him in the way, Gen. xxxii. 24. the Son of God in human form coming to prove his faith and constancy, and strengthening him for the conflict: he wept and made supplication unto him, and thus prevailed; these being the most potent arms that we can use to obtain every blessing from the Angel of the covenant, whose eternal power and godhead here appear, being the object of the patriarch's adoration and prayers. His faithless seed had given up the struggle, and, having revolted from God's worship, had forfeited all interest in him, and communion with him; as all must do who live a prayerless life. *He found him in Beth-el*, both before and after this, Gen. xxviii. xxxv. and there renewed the covenant with him, and in him with his posterity, *there he spake with us:* but they had apostatized, and turned *Beth-el, the house of God*, into *Beth-aven, the house of iniquity;* and therefore had justly forfeited the promised mercies. And this person with whom Jacob wrestled, and who spake to him, was the true Jehovah, even the Lord God of hosts; the Lord Jehovah is his memorial, his name, expressive of his self-existence, eternity, and immutability, who should by right be worshipped, adored, and served by all, and by them especially to whom he had appeared so gracious. Their neglect of him, therefore, and disobedience were the more criminal.

4. They are exhorted yet to return to God. *Therefore turn thou to thy God*, to this glorious Jehovah, from whom they had so greatly departed; and, whenever they did so, they would prove his covenant mercies still offered to them, and he would own his relation to them as *their God. Keep mercy and judgment*, the two grand pillars of vital godliness, comprehending every act of kindness to men's bodies and souls, and that integrity and uprightness which in every word and deed should be observed; and wait on thy God continually, in every appointed means of grace, for those supports of his Spirit which alone can enable us for the exercise of charity and justice to men, and that unreserved obedience and resignation which we owe to his blessed Self.

2dly, We have a change of person from Judah to Ephraim.

1. Ephraim is charged with deceit in trade. *He is a merchant, or a Canaanite*, more like such a one than a descendant

C H A P. XIII.

Ephraim's glory, by reason of idolatry, vanisheth. God's anger for their unkindness. A promise of God's mercy. A judgment for rebellion.

[Before Christ 725.]

WHEN Ephraim spake, trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died.

descendant from Israel; *the balances of deceit are in his hand, imposing by false weights and measures on those with whom he dealt: he loveth to oppress, takes delight in such wickedness, and pleases himself with the thought of his own ingenuity. Note; Fraudulent tradesmen are the vilest of robbers.*

2. Ephraim vindicates himself from the accusation. *Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance; as if his success sanctified the means by which he acquired his riches; and that his prosperity, notwithstanding the warnings of the prophets, secured his impunity. In all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin, none such as deserved that name, so fair and upright they pretended their dealings had been; and that, if their trade was submitted to the severest scrutiny, it would stand the test; while to their own labour, not God's blessing, they impiously ascribe their gain. Note; (1.) A carnal heart regards its riches as its most substantial good. (2.) Many pride themselves on their fair character among men, who in the day of God will be found very different from what they appear. (3.) Self-deceivers will not call their iniquity sin: "it is the way of trade; every body does so; "one could not live without it:" these are plausible excuses; but God is not mocked; all unrighteousness is sin, and the wages of it death eternal.*

3. Idolatry is charged upon them. *Is there iniquity in Gilead? in that pleasant land, in a city of priests, a city of refuge too? Surely they are vanity; the inhabitants, like the other Israelites, are devoted to idolatry; they sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal to their idols, yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the fields, so thick they stood; or, as some suppose, so should they be beaten in pieces, and become a heap of rubbish.*

4. Notwithstanding these provocations, God gives some intimations of mercy in store for them, if they will return. *And I, that am the Lord thy God, still owning in some sense the relation, from the land of Egypt, from that time having taken them nationally for his people, will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feasts; which might refer to their return from Babylon; or rather respects the times of the Gospel, when the converted Jews should rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have a place in his church; and it also looks forward to their expected restoration to their own land. I have also spoken by the prophets in time past, or I will speak, sending forth pastors and teachers to preach his Gospel; and I have multiplied, or will multiply, visions; I have done so, and will again under the Gospel dispensation; and I have used, or will use, similitudes, as was the case in the Jewish church, where the whole service was figurative, and was especially fulfilled in the parables*

2 And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols, according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.

3 Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away,

which Christ so frequently delivered. *Note; The Lord hath used every gracious method to communicate to us the messages of his grace. If, after all, we continue wilfully ignorant, sin lieth at our door.*

5. What God had done for their forefathers was a strong proof of his kindness to them, and served to shew their ingratitude. *And Jacob fled into the country of Syria, to Laban; and Israel served for a wife seven years; and, being then deceived by Laban, who gave him Leah instead of Rachel, on receiving her also the following week, for a wife he kept sheep seven years more; which is instanced both as a proof of the meanness of their original, for a Syrian ready to perish was their father, and as a mark of God's favour to them, in raising them from so low a beginning to be a mighty nation; and reflected highly on their ingratitude. And by a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved, by Moses, who was the figure of Christ, the great Redeemer and Saviour, the deliverer of his faithful people from the bondage of sin, Satan, death, and hell. Now God having so wonderfully dealt with them, and saved them from their enemies, they were bound by every tie of love and duty to serve him; but they made the basest returns when they rebelled against him, and rejected his prophets, to one of whom they had such unspeakable obligations. Note; All God's goodness to the sinner will be remembered at the last, to convince him of his ingratitude, and leave him without excuse.*

6. They having made the most base returns to God for his kindness; he is justly provoked to punish them severely. *Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly by his sins, and especially idolatry: therefore shall he leave his blood upon him; either the innocent blood shed by him shall be required of him, or his own blood shall be poured upon him, shed by the sword of vengeance for all his crying sins; and his reproach shall his Lord return unto him; the reproaches cast upon God by his idolatry, and on the prophets who testified against it, shall return into his own bosom, when he shall be a poor, wretched, despicable captive in a strange land. Note; The sinner shall surely bear the shame of his iniquities, either in time covered with penitent confusion, or in eternity with everlasting contempt.*

C H A P. XIII.

Ver. 1. When Ephraim spake, trembling] When Ephraim promulged his edicts, or first became a kingdom. Houbigant. It may be otherwise understood, that when he behaved himself with dutiful submission and obedience to God, his kingdom was powerful; but when he gave himself up to idolatry, his strength immediately declined.

as the chaff *that* is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney.

4 ¶ Yet I *am* the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for *there is* no saviour beside me.

5 I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.

6 According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me.

7 Therefore I will be unto them as a lion:

The word *Baal* is here used in its general sense, for false gods.

Ver. 2. Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves] Or it should rather be rendered, *Let the sacrificers of men kiss the calves*. It appears from this passage, that superstition and idolatry had made such a progress among the ten tribes, that human sacrifices were made an essential rite in the worship of the calves. And this was the finishing stroke, the last stage of their impiety; that they said *Let the sacrificers of men kiss the calves*: let them consider themselves as the most acceptable worshippers, who approach the image with human blood. *Kiss the calves*; that is to say, *worship the calves*. Among the ancient idolaters, to kiss the idol was an act of the most solemn adoration. Thus we read in Holy Writ of *all the knees which have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him*. Tully mentions a brazen statue of Hercules at Agrigentum, in which the workmanship of the mouth was sensibly worn by the frequent kisses of the worshippers. And in allusion to this rite, the holy Psalmist, calling upon the apostate faction to avert the wrath of the incarnate God by full acknowledgment of his divinity, bids them *kiss the Son*; that is to say, worship him.

It may seem extraordinary, that we find it no where mentioned in the sacred history by whom the practice was introduced of sacrificing men to the calves, the pretended emblems of the true God. But this would appear an objection of no great weight to the interpretation I have given of the prophet's words, which is the only one, I think, that they will naturally bear; if the prevalence of the practice were of necessity implied in the words of the prophet so interpreted. But it is possible, that the calves themselves were never so worshipped; but that the zeal for idolatry was so great with some of the latter kings, that they made it a condition upon which alone they would tolerate the worship of Jehovah in the calves, that the worshipper should join in the offering of human sacrifices to Moloch, or some other idol. For if any of the kings of Israel issued an edict of toleration, under such a condition; he said, in effect, "Let the sacrificers of men kiss the calves." It is true, no such measure is mentioned in the sacred history. But the silence of the history is certainly no confutation of any thing, to which the prophets clearly allude as a fact. For the history of the kingdom of Israel, under the different usurpers, after the fall of Zedekiah, the son of the second Jeroboam, is so concise and general, that we know little of the detail of it, but what is to be gathered from allusions. We have the names of the kings in succession, the length of their reigns, and their principal exploits. But we know nothing of the particulars, but what we gather from the prophets, or from the more circumstantial history of the collateral reigns in the kingdom of Judah; insomuch that human

victims may have been offered to the calves, or the worshippers of the calves may have been compelled to dip their hands in the blood of Moloch's victims; though no evidence of either practice remains, but this allusion of the prophet Hosea; which leaves some degree of doubt between the two. Sacrifices to the calves themselves seem to me the more probable object of the allusion.

When it is recollected, that Solomon himself built a temple to Moloch, and that Ahab introduced the worship of the Tyrian Baal in the kingdom of Samaria, and that both these idols were appeased with infant blood; there is too much reason to believe, that the practice must have begun early in both kingdoms; although it probably was late before it came to a height in either. And yet the first mention of it, in the history of the kingdom of Samaria, is when the sacred writer closes that history, with an enumeration of the crimes which provoked the judgment of God, and brought on its ruin, 2 Kings, xvii. 17. Nevertheless, it is certain, that this abominable custom was of older date, and perhaps of not much older date, in the kingdom of Samaria, than in that of Judah. For, in the kingdom of Judah, Ahaz is the first king, of whom we read that he adopted the practice. And it is mentioned, as one of the things in which he followed the example of the kings of Israel;—*Ahaz—did not that which was right in the sight of Jehovah, like David his father. But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, insomuch that he passed his son through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, &c.* See 2 Kings, xvi. 2, 3.

Upon the whole, it may be concluded with certainty, from this text of Hosea, that, in the latter period of the monarchy of the ten tribes, the practice of human sacrifices came to such a height, and was so much countenanced by the kings and rulers, that it was either enjoined as an essential in the worship even of the calves; or required of their worshippers, with regard to other idols, as the only condition upon which even that shadow of the true worship would be tolerated. The time when this took place cannot be determined with certainty; I think it must have been as early as the reign of Menahem; for, from the expressions in 2 Kings, xvi. 3. we may gather, that Ahaz had the example of more kings of Israel than one or two, for the detestable rites, which he introduced among his own subjects.

Ver. 4. Yet I am, &c.] For I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt: And thou shalt see that there is no other God but me, nor any Saviour beside me. Houbigant.

Ver. 5. I did know thee, &c.] I fed thee, &c. Houbigant after the LXX.

Ver. 6. According to their pasture, so were they filled] But they were filled in their pastures. Houbigant.

Ver.

as a leopard by the way will I observe them :

8 I will meet them as a bear *that is bereaved of her whelps*, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion : the wild beast shall tear them.

9 ¶ O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself ; but in me *is* thine help.

10 I will be thy king : where *is any other* that may save thee in all thy cities ? and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes ?

11 I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took *him* away in my wrath.

12 The iniquity of Ephraim *is bound up* ; his sin *is hid*.

13 The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him : he *is* an unwise son ; for he should not stay long in *the place* of the breaking forth of children.

14 I will ransom them from the power of the grave ; I will redeem them from death : O death, I will be thy plagues ; O grave, I will be thy destruction : repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

15 ¶ Though he be fruitful among *his brethren*, an east wind shall come, the wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up : he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels.

Ver. 7. As a leopard, &c.] As a leopard in the way to the Assyrians. Houbigant.

Ver. 9, 10. O Israel, &c.] O Israel, I will destroy thee, and who shall bring thee help?—ver. 10. Where now is thy king, that he may save thee in all thy cities? And thy judges, &c. Houbigant.

Ver. 11. I gave thee a king] I will give thee a king in mine anger, and will take him away, &c. We retain the future, because this may be considered as an answer to the demand just made, Give me a king, &c.

Ver. 12. The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up, &c.] The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up in a bundle: His sin is kept as a deposit. Houbigant. It is laid by as a treasure; it is not forgotten; the time for punishing Ephraim is not come, though it is not far off. Manet alta mente repōitum.

Ver. 13. The sorrows, &c.] The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come on his account: But he is a foolish infant; nor will he place himself where is the breaking forth of children. Houbigant.

Ver. 14. I will ransom them, &c.] Shall I deliver them from the jaws of the grave? Shall I redeem them from death? O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy destructive power? Houbigant. If the ideas here used primarily refer to the restoration of the Jews; they have also, no doubt, an immediate reference to that great subject to which St. Paul applies them; 1 Cor. xv. 54, 55.

Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes] The frequent and sudden transitions from threatening to promise, from indignation to pathetic persuasion, and the contrary, produce much obscurity in the latter part of this prophet; which however disappears, when breaks are made in the proper places. In the 13th verse, the peril of Ephraim's situation, arising from his own hardened thoughtlessness, is described in the most striking images. In the 14th, God the Saviour comforts him with the promise of the final deliverance of the Jewish nation. In these words, which may be rendered, No repentance is discoverable to my eye, the Saviour complains, that these terrors and these hopes are all ineffectual: that he perceives no signs of repentance wrought by them. The Hebrew sounds literally, "Repentance is hidden from mine eyes." The

total defect of the thing is most strongly expressed in the assertion, that nothing of it is to be discerned by the all-searching eye of the divine Saviour. This complaint of universal impenitence, with the reason assigned, introduces new threatening, with which the chapter ends. The reason assigned for the impenitence is, that Ephraim is run wild among savage beasts, broken loose from the restraints of God's holy law, given up to his depraved appetites, and turned mere heathen.

Ver. 15. Though he be fruitful among his brethren] Though he had been fruitful; פריא iuprii: in which word there is an allusion to the name Ephraim; אפרי apri, which comes from פרה parah; and therefore the similitude is continued throughout the verse.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The sin which above all others filled up the measure of Israel's crimes was their idolatry, and this is here especially reproved.

1. It had been the bane of their prosperity, and the cause of all their miseries. *When Ephraim spake, trembling, with deep veneration towards the divine Majesty, and with filial fear before him, he exalted himself in Israel, grew distinguished and great among the tribes; or when he spake there was trembling, all heard him with respect and honour; but when he offended in Baal, he died, they went apace to ruin, and at last perished as a nation for their idolatry. Note; As godliness is the honour and stability of a nation, so sin is the shame, and, sooner or later, will be the ruin of any people.*

2. They had multiplied their abominations. *And now they sin more and more; having once offended in Baal, they grew worse and worse; and have made molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen; miserable gods! which silver could make, and craftsmen deity. They say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves, in token of religious adoration, when they brought their offerings; or, Let the sacrificers of men kiss the calves, those who offered human sacrifices to these hated idols.*

3. God's wrath is denounced upon them for their idolatries. *Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, which vanishes*

16 Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in

pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up.

vanishes before the sun; and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, light, worthless, and weak; and as the smoke out of the chimney, which is scattered as it rises. So easily, speedily, and universally, would their ruin come upon them by the army of the Assyrians.

2dly, We may observe,

1. The obligations that God had laid upon them. *Yet, notwithstanding their provocations, I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt; from the day that he took them thence, he declared his regard to them; and to this day was ready to own the relation, on their penitent return to him. And thou shalt know no God but me: they ought to have known no other, and would find by experience none but he able to save them; for there is no saviour besides me: on whatever else they placed their confidence, they would be assuredly disappointed. I did know thee in the wilderness, when reduced to the greatest distress, in the land of great drought, where every necessary of life was wanting; yet he liberally provided for them, brought water from the rock, rained manna from heaven, and fed them by daily miracles.*

2. Their ingratitude to God for these mercies. *According to their pasture, so were they filled: they rioted in luxury when he brought them into Canaan: they were filled with plenty there provided for them, and their heart was exalted; their sensuality made them proud and secure: therefore have they forgotten me. Note; Worldly prosperity is very apt to seduce the heart from God; and such is the vileness of sinners, that the mercies which should excite their love, and quicken their thankfulness, too often make them forget the giver in the gift, and abuse in pride and luxury the blessings which he bestows.*

3. The wrath denounced against them for their baseness. *Therefore I will be unto them as a lion, &c. By all these beasts of prey the Lord designs to shew the severity of his vengeance, and the terrible ravages which should be made among them: with the lion's strength, the lynx or leopard's eye, and the fury of a bear bereaved of her whelps, shall the Assyrians, the beasts that he sends among them, mark them out for the slaughter, rush on them unable to resist, and tear them in pieces without remorse or pity. So fearful a thing is it to fall into the hands of the living God, if his wrath be kindled, yea, but a little. Sinner, how can thine heart endure, when God shall thus deal with thee?*

3dly, The prophet pathetically laments the miseries of his people; *O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself: their sins were the cause of all the threatened judgments, and they had only themselves to blame for their sufferings. And this is most applicable to every fallen creature, who by his sins has most justly provoked God's wrath and indignation against him, and must perish eternally, if through the rich grace of God he do not penitently return to the only true refuge of Israel. But in me is thine help: desperate as their case appeared, God was still able and willing to*

save them when they truly turned to him. The most guilty need not despair of pardon, nor the most helpless of deliverance, if they desire to return; since God has laid help on one mighty to save. Though in and of ourselves not a ray of hope appear, yet they who look to him shall hear his atoning Blood speak peace to their consciences, and find his almighty grace effectual to subdue their corruptions.

1. The first step that led to their destruction was, casting off the divine government and asking a mortal king instead of the immortal God. *And where is thy king now, that he may save thee in all thy cities? Unable to protect them, he is a captive himself: so foolish as well as sinful an exchange had they made, when God had said, I will be thy king, whom they rejected. And where are thy judges, of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes? They are now no longer able to support the sinking state. I gave thee a king in mine anger; for God sometimes is pleased to gratify the desires of the wicked, and make the thing which they ask their heaviest curse and plague; and I took him away in my wrath, either Saul, or, as the words may be rendered, I will take him away, that is Hoshea, the last king of Israel, with whom the whole nation was destroyed, or carried into captivity. Thus God in wrath takes away what he gave in anger, and leaves us to mourn in bitterness our perverseness and folly.*

2. Their other sins were many, and ready to be produced against them. *The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up, his sin is hid. The sinner himself is little apprized of the black catalogue of sins ready to be produced against him; but they are all upon record, treasured up against the day of wrath. The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him, distress and anguish the most agonizing and painful. He is an unwise son, who will neither learn of God's word nor be taught by his judgments; for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children. He considers not how to extricate himself from his troubles, or by repentance to prevent them, struggling no more than a still-born child. Or the words may be rendered, For he will not stay the time for the breaking forth of children: they would not wait for the Messiah, who should bring many sons unto glory; but turned from him to serve idols; and thus were cut off in their sins, because they rebelled against their God.*

3. Their judgment is threatened. *Though he be fruitful among his brethren, as the name Ephraim signifies, increased in numbers, abounding in wealth and honour, an east wind shall come, the army of the Assyrians marching rapidly and irresistibly; the wind of the Lord, as being sent and commissioned by him, shall come up from the wilderness, hot and scorching, as it sometimes blew in the sandy deserts; and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up, their country laid utterly desolate; and he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant places; the Assyrian monarch shall seize all their richest and most valuable possessions: Samaria shall become desolate, her palaces laid in*

C H A P. XIV.

An exhortation to repentance. A promise of God's blessing.

[Before Christ 725.]

O ISRAEL, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

2 Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.

3 Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, *Ye are our*

gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

4 ¶ I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.

5 I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.

6 His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon.

7 They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.

in the dust, her houses without inhabitants; for she hath rebelled against her God by her idolatries and other sins. They shall fall by the sword of the enemy, their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with-child shall be ripped up: such inhuman massacres should the Assyrians commit, in revenge of their perfidy, and the long siege that they sustained. While we read with horror, let it be remembered, such is man! and nothing but the restraints of grace prevent the world from being an Aceldama, a field of blood.

4. One gracious promise serves to brighten up this dark scene. Though they had rejected God's government and worship, yet still, says he, *I will be their king*, to rescue and save from the hand of their enemies all who return to him: *I will ransom them from the power of the grave*; not merely from their state of captivity, in which they seemed as buried; but these promises look forward to the great salvation of Jesus, who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him: *I will redeem them from death*, raising all the faithful from the death of sin to a life of righteousness, in virtue of the price that he has paid on the cross; and at the last day he will come to raise the bodies of his saints from their graves, fashioned like to his glorious body: *O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction*. Death is already a vanquished foe to the faithful through the resurrection of Jesus, and shortly it will be intirely swallowed up in victory, when its very being shall be destroyed, and the grave no more devour, because there shall be no more death. Well may the apostle triumph in the prospect, and every faithful soul exult in this glorious hope! *Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes*: the promise may be considered as given to the faithful; the victory is sure to them: therefore we may confidently trust, and not be afraid.

C H A P. XIV.

Ver. 2. Take with you words] Take with you leaders. Houbigant; who renders the latter part of the verse, *That we may receive good things, and may render the fruits of our lips*. See Heb. xiii. 15. *The calves of our lips*, may signify those praises which are to be in the stead of sacrifices; of calves and of goats.

Ver. 4. Freely] Are good works then nothing, you will say? "Is there no place at all for them in the doctrine of repentance? I answer, that hitherto the discourse hath been about remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. These are entirely gratuitous, and not of our merit, but simply of the inexhaustible goodness and compassion of God. Therefore, when we speak of the remission of sins, it is right to be silent about our own works; which, because they are done without the Holy Spirit, although with regard to civil society they may not be bad, yet cannot be called good, and ought not; because of the unclean heart, from which they proceed. But when through faith we have received remission of sins, and, together with that, the gift of the Holy Ghost; forthwith from the heart, as from a pure fountain, come forth works also good, and well-pleasing to God," &c. See Luther's Commentary upon this chapter.

*Ver. 5, 6. I will be as the dew, &c.] These verses contain gracious promises of God's favour upon Israel's conversion, represented by different metaphors. In the fifth verse, it is described by that refreshment, which copious dews give to the grass in the heat of summer. If we consider the nature of the climate, and the necessity of dews in so hot a country, not only to refresh, but likewise to preserve life; if we consider also the beauty of the oriental lilies, the fragrance of the cedars which grow upon Lebanon, the beautiful appearance which the spreading olive-trees afforded, the exhilarating coolness caused by the shade of such trees, and the aromatic sinell exhaled by the cedars; we shall then partly understand the force of the metaphors here employed by the prophet; but their full energy no one can conceive, till he both feels the want and enjoys the advantage of the particulars referred to, in that climate wherein the prophet wrote. See Bishop Lowth's 12th and 19th Prelection, and Gen. xxvii. 28. Instead of, *His branches shall spread*, in ver. 6. Houbigant reads, *His suckers shall go forth*.*

Ver. 7. They that dwell under his shadow shall return, &c.] They shall return and dwell under his shadow; they shall sprout out again as the corn, and blossom as the vine: he shall be praised as the wine of Lebanon, or "as the most exquisite wine"

8 Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir-tree. From

me is thy fruit found.

9 Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know

“wine which was offered at the altar.” Under his shadow means the shadow of JEHOVAH.

Ver. 8. *I have heard him, &c.] I will hear him; I will exalt him on high, like a green fir-tree: thy fruits shall spring forth from me.* Houbigant.

Ver. 9. *Who is wise, &c.]* Many interpreters are of opinion, that the prophet here hints at the obscurity of his prophesy: as much as to say, “Behold, I have set before you what is dark and difficult, surrounded with obscurity: who will have penetration sufficient to enter into and develop the mystery?” See Calmet, and Bishop Reynolds’s Sermons on this chapter; where the reader will find a variety of useful and improving remarks.

Transgressors] It should be rendered *revolters*. מְרִשְׁמִים *merishmim*. This word expresses a degree and enormity of disobedience far beyond any thing contained in the notion of “transgressors, prevaricators,” or any other denomination of guilt, by which the word is rendered in our English Bible. It denotes rebels, in the highest sense of the word; and, in a religious sense, such as wilfully, with premeditation, disobey God from hatred of his authority. It is bold avowed rebellion, or revolt, disowning the authority of the sovereign, and having for its end the overthrow of his sovereignty. But it will be said, Who ever was so mad, as to avow or entertain a design or hope of overthrowing the sovereignty of God? I say, numbers in all ages of the world. Atheists, deists, idolaters, and secular powers that persecute revealed religion. Many of these, indeed, retain the name of a god, or gods, as signifying, in their conceptions, an *animus mundi*, or physical powers in the different parts of the material world. But they all disown and oppose the God of the Old Testament, and the New; the God of Jews, and of Christians. And they endeavour what they can to overthrow his authority, by uniting their efforts (in vain, but much in earnest) for the extirpation of the Christian religion. If those, who, in the present day, are the most forward, and most powerful, in this work of impiety, affect a partiality for the Jews; it is because they hope to draw them in, to take part in the demolition of Christianity; and, when that is effected, they expect to find in Judaism an easy conquest. Whether any part, or what part, of the Jews may be drawn into this snare of hell, we presume not to predict. We hope that the great majority of that race will have too much discretion to be duped. This at least we know, that ultimately the whole race of Israel, of the natural Israel, will return and seek Jehovah their God, and the David their king. They shall return, and, sitting under his shadow, they will flourish. The head of the faction leagued against us and them, against our God and theirs, is the devil. If I am not much mistaken, he is more than once named in Scripture מְרִשְׁמִים *merishmim*, *The Rebel, The Apostate*. And the same participle in the plural, which is the word here, denotes the followers of that chief, *rebels, revolters*. See Bishop Horsley. This ninth verse, the close of Hosea’s written prophecies, much resembles those grave moral sayings, with which the

Greek dramas are usually closed by the chorus; but for the weightiness of the matter, and the simplicity, brevity, and solemnity of easy unaffected diction, it is not to be equalled by any thing that the Attic muse, in her soberest mood, produced.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, A door of hope is here opened for God’s believing people. He is not inexorable, if we will return: he waiteth to be gracious.

1. They are called upon and enjoined to come to him. *O Israel, return unto the Lord*, who is still ready to receive the perishing but returning sinner, to pardon and save him; and, though so long rejected, will not in that case refuse to be called *thy God: for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity*, which then, now, and ever, was, is, and will be, the cause of all our miseries; but when we see, feel, and lament it, and turn to God, then shall not iniquity be our destruction.

2. Words are suggested to them, suitable to their state and condition. *Take with you words, and turn to the Lord; say unto him, Take away all iniquity*, this being the first great want of the penitent sinner’s soul. His guilt lies upon him as a heavy burden, which he longs to have removed; his corruptions thrust sore at him, and he is without power of himself to help himself: earnestly, therefore, he prays for a sense of God’s pardoning love, to deliver him from the condemnation of sin, of *all sin*, as blotted out through the blood of Jesus; and for power against iniquity, against *every iniquity*, that it may be mortified and conquered by divine grace: *and receive us graciously; for we have no desert to plead, but the very reverse: or receive good; accept us and our services as well-pleasing in Christ Jesus: or give good*, every blessing which we need, and the ability for that goodness which thou dost enjoin; for from him alone cometh every good and perfect gift: *so will we render the calves of our lips*, those sacrifices of praise which shall please the Lord better than a bullock that hath horns and hoofs. *Asbur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses, seeking to Assyria or Egypt for help; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods*, their idols being renounced and abhorred; and thus the returning sinner, who in simplicity approaches a pardoning God, feels his heart constrained to part with every idol; to renounce his most easily besetting sin; to disclaim all dependence upon his own doings and duties, and every trust upon creature help, that he may solely rest on the blood, the infinite merit, and the Spirit of a Redeemer, and expect his whole salvation from the rich and unmerited grace of God. *For in thee the fatherless findeth mercy*. It is God’s great honour and glory, that he doth not despise nor reject the prayer of the poor destitute penitent: nay, though our distresses arise from our own folly and perverseness, he will not therefore cast us out, if we penitently apply to him for mercy; but the more magnify the wonders of his mercy in the depths of our misery, and in the views of our utter unworthiness.

them? for the ways of the LORD *are* right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.

2dly, Great and precious are the promises recorded in this chapter, in answer to the prayer of real penitence. God assures the penitent,

1. Of the removal of that wrath which they dreaded: *mine anger is turned away from him.* There is no wrath in God against the sinner who returns to him through Jesus Christ, and pleads the full atonement and infinite merit of his divine Substitute.

2. *I will love them freely.* Sin, the cause of his displeasure, being now through the Redeemer forgiven and blotted out, he can, consistently with his own glory, *love them*; and he will do it *freely*, not in consideration of any desert in his believing people, for they have none; but according to his own rich mercy and amazing love.

3. *I will heal their backsliding*; recover his returning people from their sinful departures, apply the suitable medicines of grace to their wounds, and deliver them from the power of *all that iniquity* against which they pray.

4. He will quicken, comfort, stablish, strengthen, settle them. *I will be as the dew unto Israel*, refreshing the parched ground; and so do his Word and Spirit revive the drooping heart of the poor dejected sinner. *He shall grow as the lily*, in the beauty of a gracious profession, and the unfulfilled exemplariness of a good conversation; *and cast forth his roots as Lebanon*, firm rooted on the rock Christ, enabled to withstand every stormy blast of temptation and the united force of earth and hell. Thus in the faithful believer the purity of the lily and the strength of the cedar are united. *His branches shall spread*, the gospel-church being enlarged with converts, and each believing soul increasing in the knowledge and love of God; *and, abounding in every good word and work, his beauty shall be as the olive-tree*, whose leaves are ever green; so pleasing in the beauty of holiness shall God's people appear; *and his smell as Lebanon*, the graces that he exercises, and the acceptable sacrifices that he offers, fragrant as the odoriferous trees which grew on that famed mountain. *They that dwell under his shadow shall return*, under the shadow of Jesus, which covers the genuine believer from the scorching heat of a fiery law, and refreshes the soul of the weary; and to him shall they confidently fly for shelter and consolation; *they shall revive as the corn*, which in the spring vegetates strongly after the nipping blasts of winter's cold; so the saints of God rise from their afflictions and temptations, fairer and stronger than before; *and grow as the vine*, supported by the divine power, and fruitful in all good works, to the praise and glory of God; *and the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon*, diffusing their fragrance, and by their examples and gracious discourse serving as cordials to revive the dejected and disconsolate.

3dly, We have,

1. Penitent Ephraim's final determination. *Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?* with abhorrence casting them away, and purposing in the strength of divine grace to return to them no more. Thus does the converted soul renounce, with detestation, its once most beloved sins; not that we can fulfil the least of these resolutions in our own natural strength, but by the grace of God, and by his love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us. No. It is God who promises that he will enable penitent returning Ephraim to speak thus; and he will give him the ability to perform his resolutions.

2. God's gracious regard towards him. *I have heard him, and observed him*; heard his prayers, and seen his tears, and noted all the gracious purposes which his heart has formed; for God delights to behold the returning prodigal, and looks with tenderest compassion and warmest affection on him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, ready to answer and relieve all his complaints.

3. The Lord will bless, protect, and save him. *I am like a green fir-tree.* Under the shadow of Jesus, his believing people sit with delight, safe from the sultry beams of day, and protected from storm and rain, from every spiritual enemy, and from the power of evil: *from me is thy fruit found*; all our spiritual blessings being derived from him, and all our fruits of grace springing from the supplies ministered by him the living root, are therefore to be ascribed entirely to his praise and glory.

4. The prophet closes with recommending these words to our most serious attention: *Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them?* such will be inquisitive into the mind of God, and searching the scriptures daily, shall be enlightened with the knowledge of the truth: *for the ways of the Lord are right*, all his dispensations of providence and grace, being consonant to the strictest rules of eternal justice; and the more they are truly understood, the more shall we acknowledge them to be so; *and the just shall walk in them*; obedient to his will, submissive to his providences; *but the transgressors shall fall therein*; the same word, which is a favour of life unto life to some, will prove the favour of death unto death to others, through their disobedience to God's word, or their abuse of the most glorious truths contained therein; the same doctrines of gospel-grace affording the sweetest consolations, and suggesting to the faithful the strongest arguments for all holy conversation, while the hypocrite and apostate suck from them deadly poison, and make that which should have been for their help an occasion of falling.

THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET JOEL.

IT seems most probable, that this prophesy of Joel is to be placed in the reign of Abaz, after the Edomites had smitten Judah, and used great violence; (compare 2 Chron. xxviii. 17. and Joel, iii. 19.) and after the Philistines had invaded their cities, and slain and expelled their inhabitants, (compare 2 Chron. xxviii. 18. and Joel, iii. 4.) and were both of them triumphing in their success: upon which account God particularly threatens them by Joel. And as to the Philistines, this prophesy was executed against them in the reign of Hezekiah, who succeeded Abaz; it being expressly predicted of him by Isaiah, that he should dissolve their government and destroy them, Isai. xiv. 29. &c. and his history of Hezekiah furnishes us with the accomplishment. The prophesy before us consists of four parts, and relates only to the kingdom of Judah. The prophet first describes and bewails the havoc which should be made by the locusts, and the distress of the country by the excessive heat and drought, ch. i.—ii. 12. Secondly, he exhorts the Jews to repentance, with a promise on that condition of God's removing the judgment, taking them into his favour, and restoring to them their former plenty, ch. ii. 12—27. Thirdly, he foretels the plentiful effusion of the Holy Spirit which should happen in the latter days, ch. ii. 28—32. And, fourthly, he proclaims God's judgments against the neighbouring nations, that had unjustly invaded, plundered, and carried his people into captivity; and, as Kimchi says, delivers a prophesy which was to come to pass in the days of the Messiah: ch. iii. The style of Joel differs much from that of Hosea; but, though of a different kind, is equally poetical. It is elegant, perspicuous, clear, diffusive, and flowing; and at the same time very sublime, nervous, and animated. He displays the whole power of poetic description in the first and second chapters, and at the same time his fondness for metaphors, comparisons, and allegories; nor is the connection of his subjects less remarkable than the grace of his diction. It is not, however, to be denied, that in some places he is very obscure, which every one will observe on reading the latter part of this prophesy. See Lowth's 21st Prelection, and Chandler on Joel.

C H A P. I.

Joel, declaring sundry judgments of God, exhorteth to observe them, and to mourn: he prescribeth a fast for complaint.

[Before Christ 800.]

THE word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel.

2 Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers?

3 Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation.

C H A P. I.

Ver. 2. Hear this, ye old men] This prophesy begins with threatening the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the land of Judah, with such desolation of their country, by

swarms of locusts, as had never happened to them before in the memory of the oldest inhabitants of the land, and as should occasion the utmost distress to all sorts of persons among them. The havock that should be made by these creatures

4 That which the palmer-worm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankar-worm eaten; and that which the canker-worm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten.

5 Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and

howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine; for it is cut off from your mouth.

6 For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek-teeth of a great lion.

creatures is described in a lively manner. Their corn of all sorts should be devoured, and all their choicest fruit-trees entirely destroyed; so that there should be the greatest scarcity of provision in the land, and not enough to supply the meat and drink-offerings for the altar of God. And what should increase this calamity was, the excessive heat and drought which should happen at the same time, whereby their herds and flocks should be almost ready to perish for want of water. Chandler.

Ver. 4. *That which the palmer-worm hath left, &c.*] Bochart has given many probable reasons to believe, that the four Hebrew words here used, חסיל *chasil*, ילק *ielek*, ארבה *arbeh*, גזזם *gazam*, signify four species of locust; which the learned reader will find in his Hieroz. tom. ii. lib. v. c. 1. See also Scheuchzer on the place.

Ver. 5. *Awake, ye drunkards*] This character is given to Ephraim, Isai. xxviii. 1, 3.; and excessive drinking is assigned as a reason of the captivity of Israel, Amos, vi. 6, 7. Kimchi's commentary on the place, is, "You who accustom yourselves to get drunk with wine; awake ye out of your sleep, and weep night and day; for the wine shall fail you, because the locust shall devour the grape." See Chandler, and Sharpe. The author of the *Observations* thinks that *new wine* is a faulty translation; and that it should be rendered *sweet wine*; sweet as the *new-trodden juice of grapes*, but *old*. Wines (says he) of this sort were chiefly esteemed in former times, as appears from the Septuagint; for that which our version of Esther, i. 7. renders, *Royal wine in abundance*, according to the *state of the king*, they read, *Much and sweet wine, such as the king himself drank*. Dr. Ruffel observes of the white wines of Aleppo, that they are palatable, but *thin* and *poor*, and seldom keep found above a year. Now the prophet, in chap. iii. 18. describes a state of *great prosperity*, by the mountains dropping down *sweet wine*; as much as to say, the mountains of Judæa should not produce wine like that of Aleppo, but that which was rich, and capable of being long kept, and by that means of acquiring the greatest agreeableness. The same word אִסִּיס *asis*, is very properly translated *sweet wine* in Amos, ix. 13. and the same rendering in this place is confirmed and illustrated by an observation of Dr. Shaw's, concerning the wine of Algiers; which, says he, before the locusts destroyed the vineyards, in 1723 and 1724, was not inferior to the best *Hermitage*, either in briskness of taste or flavour. But since that time it is much degenerated; having not hitherto (that is, in 1732) recovered its usual qualities, *Travels*, p. 146. It is a *desolation of their vineyards* by locusts that Joel threatens, which thus injures their produce for many years as to briskness and flavour; and consequently nothing was more natural than to call the drunkards of Israel to mourn on that account. See Isai. xlix. 26. and the *Observations*, p. 195.

Ver. 6. *For a nation is come up*] A word of consideration

concerning the locusts may not be altogether improper, says Dr. Sharpe in his *Second Argument*, &c. And as the commentators are divided in their opinions, it will be but fair to give a brief view of what has been said on both sides. To begin then with Grotius, Houbigant, Rabbi Tanchum, Abarbanel, &c. they are of opinion, that the prophet has used this image to set forth the multitude of the Chaldean army; but then Bochart and others, on the contrary, assert, that it is an army of real locusts, and not of men. Some, as Cyril and Theodoret, have interpreted it of both. Jerome informs us, that some of the Jews before his time understood this description of the locusts to be figurative, and to mean the most powerful enemies of the Jews: and he himself is forced to confess, that while you read of locusts, you think of the Babylonians. The force of the Chaldeans (says he) is described under the metaphor of locusts. This interpretation is favoured also by the Chaldee. Pocock has, with great learning and diligence, endeavoured to prove, that locusts, not men, are here described by the prophet; and then, after such his literal interpretation, he allows it will be lawful for any to apply them to such things as he pleases. Throughout the prophecies of Daniel, kings, kingdoms, and forces, are represented under the names and parts of animals; the *lion*, *bear*, *ram*, *goat*, *horns*, *wings*. The king of Egypt is represented, Isai. xxvii. 1. by *leviathan*, the *crooked serpent*; the literal meaning is, "The crocodile of the Nile;" the real import is Pſammeticus, king of Egypt, taken prisoner by Cambyſes. The army of Nebuchadnezzar is compared to locusts (grasshoppers in our version), Jer. xlv. 23. which is a common metaphor for numerous and destructive armies, as the reader may see by comparing Isai. xxxiii. 4. Judg. vi. 5. vii. 12. It may therefore be presumed, that, under the metaphor of *locusts*, Joel describes the army of the Chaldeans; and this presumption is moreover favoured by several circumstances in the description. The locusts were of four kinds; and the enemies appointed over the Jews were of four kinds, Jer. xv. 2, 3. Jerome, with other interpreters, suppose the succession of these insects to mean the four several attacks of the Chaldeans: that is to say, *first*, in the last year of Nabopolassar, and third of Jehoiachin; *secondly*, when that king was taken prisoner, in the eleventh year of his reign; *thirdly*, in the ninth of Zedekiah; *fourthly*, about three years after, when Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. To conclude, we may with Bishop Warburton regard this as a double prophecy, and consider that Joel in his prediction of an approaching ravage by locusts, foretels likewise, in the same word, a succeeding desolation by the Assyrian army; for we are to observe, that this was God's method both in warning and punishing a sinful people. Thus when the seven nations, for their exceeding wickedness, were to be exterminated, God promises his chosen nation to *send hornets before them*,

7 He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig-tree : he hath made it clean bare, and cast *it* away ; the branches thereof are made white.

8 ¶ Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.

9 The meat-offering and the drink-offering is cut off from the house of the LORD ; the priests, the LORD'S ministers, mourn.

10 The field is wasted, the land mourneth ; for the corn is wasted : the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth.

11 Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen ; howl, O ye vine-dressers, for the wheat and for the barley ; because the harvest of the field is perished.

12 The vine is dried up, and the fig-tree languisheth ; the pomegranate-tree, the palm-tree also, and the apple-tree, *even* all the trees of the field are withered : because joy is withered away from the sons of men.

13 Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests : howl, ye ministers of the altar : come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God :

for the meat-offering and the drink-offering is withholden from the house of your God.

14 ¶ Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders *and* all the inhabitants of the land *into* the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD,

15 Alas for the day ! for the day of the LORD *is* at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.

16 Is not the meat cut off before our eyes, *yea*, joy and gladness from the house of our God ?

17 The seed is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down ; for the corn is withered.

18 How do the beasts groan ! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture ; *yea*, the flocks of sheep are made desolate.

19 O LORD, to thee will I cry : for the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field.

&c. See Exod. xxiii. 28. and Wisd. xii. 8, &c. Now Joel, under one and the same prediction, contained in this and the following chapter, foretels both these plagues ; the locusts in the primary sense, and the Assyrian army in the secondary. See Div. Leg. book vi. sect. 6. and the note on chap. ii. 20.

Ver. 7. *My vine*] This is the name of Judah, Psal. lxxx. 8. Instead of, *Cast it away*, Houbigant reads, *Deprived it of all fruit*.

Ver. 8. *Lament like a virgin*] *A young woman*. Houbigant. These words are an apostrophe to the land of Judah ; the prophet puts her in mind, that she ought to be deeply affected with the heavy strokes of divine vengeance, and express her inward sense of these calamities, with the same external marks of mourning as a wife who had lost *the husband of her youth*. See *Æneid* iv. ver. 28. and *Calmet*.

Ver. 12. *The vine is dried up*] In Barbary, in the month of June, the locusts collect themselves into compact bodies, a furlong or more square ; and afterwards, marching directly on toward the sea, let nothing escape them ; eating up every thing that is green or juicy, not only of the lesser kind of vegetables, but also the trees mentioned in this verse. The author of the *Observations* is of opinion, that *apple-tree* cannot be a proper translation in this place ; for the *apples* which the Arabs of Judæa eat at this day, are of foreign growth, and at the same time very indifferent. He is therefore of opinion that the *citron-tree* is meant. See *Observations*, p. 199. and *Dr. Shaw's Travels*.

Ver. 15. *The day of the Lord is at hand*] See *Jer.* xlvi. 10. and *Ezek.* xxx. 3.

Ver. 17. *The seed is rotten, &c.*] *Rotted*. Whoever considers the authentic accounts given of the depredations of locusts in the year 1748 in our own country, wherein they were found burrowing under ground, and consequently destroyed the *seeds under the clods*, thereby rendering the gardens desolate, must own that this part of the description is applicable to the *locusts* : though Dr. Sharpe observes, " that these calamities are the natural consequence of *war*, " and not the work of *locusts* ; and that the whole is a " picture of a country, not only pillaged and laid waste, " but also deprived of its inhabitants ; which was the truth " of the case, they having been carried into captivity." See his Second Argument, p. 333.

Ver. 18. *How do the beasts groan!*] That is, " How " grievous will be the distress of the beasts of the field ! " How sadly will they complain, through the vehemency " of thirst ! How will the herds of cattle be troubled and " perplexed ! for their verdant pastures shall be all scorched " up, and they will have none wherein to feed. The " flocks also shall be desolate, and ready to perish." See *Jer.* xiv. 1—6. xv. 2. Instead of, *The herds of cattle are perplexed*, Houbigant reads, *How mournful are the lowings of the herds!*

Ver. 19. *For the fire hath devoured, &c.*] By *the fire*, is meant the fiery heat and drought which burned up all the pastures or pleasant places, both in the wilderness and in the valleys.

Ver.

20 The beasts of the field cry also unto thee: for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

Jer. 20. The beasts, &c.—the pastures] Every one of the beasts cries, &c.—the pleasant places.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The prophet opens his discourse,

1. With an address to all the inhabitants of Judæa, old and young, whose attention he demands to the message that he was about to deliver: a message of judgment, such as the oldest could not remember, nor the tradition of former ages produce; and which ought to be handed down to the latest posterity, that, warned by the sufferings of their forefathers, they may avoid their sins.

2. The judgment itself is an invasion from a terrible enemy; and is by many applied to the Assyrians, who ravaged and desolated the country; but may literally be better referred to the armies of locusts and other insects, which, in swarms succeeding each other, devoured all the fruits of the earth, and left the whole land barren as the scorched desert. Despicable as they might seem apart, their multitudes made them formidable: not the ravages of the lions from the forest could be more fatal: not only the vine-leaves are eaten up, but the very fig-trees are barked and destroyed by them. *Note;* God never wants instruments of vengeance: the most insignificant insect can in his hand be made the severest scourge; and a locust terrible as a lion.

3. The drunkards are admonished to lament the judgment which their sins had provoked, and by which they would be particularly affected, *because the new wine is cut off from their mouths.* And justly does God punish those who abuse his favours, by depriving them of their good things, and leaving them in want and wretchedness to lament their baseness.

2dly, The whole nation, deeply affected with the calamity, is called upon to mourn in sackcloth, as a virgin who is robbed of her betrothed spouse, on whom her warmest affections were fixed, and whose loss fills her heart with bitterest anguish. *Note;* They who are wedded to worldly comforts find it death to part from them.

The corn, wine, and oil, are perished; the trees stripped of leaves and fruit, and withered away; the very earth looks dark, and mourneth over the desolations; *because joy is withered away from the sons of men;* the songs of harvest and the shouting of the vintage are silent, and nothing is heard but howling and groans. Particularly,

1. The husbandmen and vine-dressers are called to bewail the dreadful devastations: their labours are ruined, their hopes disappointed, themselves and families left to pine in want, and perish by famine.

2. The priests of the sanctuary are commanded to join the general cry, and mourn over the deserted altars, where no sacrifice smoked, no oblation was presented. They are called *ministers of the altar*, as bound to a constant attendance there; and *ministers of my God*, this being their distinguished honour; and the motive to their indefatigable labour. They would now be peculiar sufferers, and be destitute of that maintenance with which the altar used to supply them; but a nobler concern must fill their minds,

and grief to see God's worship neglected must swallow up every other concern which is merely their own. *Note;* A true minister of the Gospel has God's glory more at heart than every other consideration: compared with this, he counts not even his own life dear unto himself.

3dly, To avert the heavy wrath upon them, the prophet points out to them the properest means to be pursued. As their sufferings came from God's displeasure, to remove this must be their first concern.

1. Let a solemn fast be proclaimed, a day of deep humiliation sanctified and set apart; that with united supplications they might surround the throne of grace; and while by a strict abstinence from meat and drink they acknowledged themselves unworthy of every mercy, and, prostrate in the courts of the Lord's house, confessed the justice of the judgments that he had inflicted, they might with prayers and tears cry unto a pardoning God, that sin, the cause of their calamity, being forgiven, their sufferings, the dire effects thereof, might be removed. *Note;* (1.) National judgments call for national humiliation. (2.) When we are found in God's appointed ways, we may humbly hope that he will meet us in mercy. (3.) Affliction then answers the end for which it was sent, when it brings us to our knees, and raises the cry of fervent importunate prayer.

2. Abundant reason there is for this humiliation.

[1.] What they suffered already was grievous. If they looked into their garners, they were empty; if to God's house, no sacrifice or oblation was seen; if to the country, desolate it mourned, the seed under the clod is rotten, and the very beasts groan, *perplexed* for want of food, and pining away. *Note;* (1.) How terrible is famine: how thankful ought we to be for the great plenty that we in general enjoy; and how should we fear to provoke God, by our abuse of his mercies to withhold them! (2.) The very earth mourns, the very beasts groan under men's sins; and shall we ourselves be the only insensible beings in the whole creation?

[2.] What they feared was yet more terrible: *for the day of the Lord is at hand.* What they felt was but the beginning of sorrows, and a foretaste of the greater evil approaching; *as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come;* which may refer to the ruin of the nation at first by the Chaldeans, or afterwards by the Romans, sent to punish them for their iniquities by Jehovah, whose arm of omnipotence is irresistible. And, more generally, this may be applied to every sinner, whose judgment advances, whose damnation slumbereth not, whose everlasting destruction is at the door; unless he repent without delay, he perishes eternally. Well, therefore, may we cry, *Alas for the day!*

3. The prophet urges them hereto by the examples before them.

[1.] His own. *O Lord, to thee will I cry:* as deeply affected with their sins and their sufferings, he earnestly addresses his prayer to God; to him who wounds, and alone is able to heal; the fire of whose wrath, whatever instruments

C H A P. II.

He sheweth unto Zion the terribleſs of God's judgment: he exhorteth to repentance, preſcribeth a faſt, and promiſeth a bleſſing thereon: he comforteth Zion with preſent and future bleſſings.

[Before Chriſt 800.]

BLOW ye the trumpet in Zion, and ſound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for *it is nigh at hand*;

2 A day of darkneſs and of gloomineſs, a day of clouds and of thick darkneſs, as the morning ſpread upon the mountains: a great people and a ſtrong; there hath not been ever the like, neither ſhall be any more after it, *even* to the years of many generations.

3 A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land *is* as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them

instruments were employed, had almost consumed them; and He only, who had kindled, could quench it. *Note*; They who call others to fasting and prayer, must themselves lead the way.

[2.] Of the beasts. *The beasts of the field cry also unto thee*; with sounds inarticulate indeed, but which the Lord can hear and pity. They are parched with thirst and famished with hunger; for the rivers of water are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, scorched up with the excessive drought. *Note*; The very lowing of the oxen, yea, the ravens' cries, shall rise up in judgment to reproach the stupidity of the sinner who restrains prayer before God.

C H A P. II.

Ver. 1. Blow ye the trumpet, &c.] The prophet in the preceding chapter describes the locusts as the army of God; and now, in pursuance of the same metaphor, exhorts the people to prepare to meet them, in the same terms as if they were alarmed to oppose an enemy, which was always done by the sound of the trumpet. The trumpet in Zephaniah is the same which sounds in Joel; and therefore both proclaim the same event;—the destruction of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar. See Zeph. ii. 1, 2. The same famine, drought, and destruction from the Almighty, are foretold by Jeremiah: and indeed the destruction of Jerusalem, and the subsequent captivity under Nebuchadnezzar, are mentioned by all the prophets who lived from the days of Uzziah to those of Zedekiah; in the eleventh year of whose reign the city was besieged. See Sharpe's Second Argument.

Ver. 2. A day of darkneſs, &c.] We have in this and the following verses a description of the locusts: their fierceness and speed, ver. 4.; the noise and din of their approach, ver. 5.; the order and regularity of their march, ver. 7, 8.; their darkening the very lights of heaven by

a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them.

4 The appearance of them *is* as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run.

5 Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array.

6 Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness.

7 They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks.

8 Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and *when* they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded.

their number and flight, ver. 10.; the havoc that they should occasion, ver. 3.; the places that they should invade, ver. 7, 9.; and the consternation and distress which they should bring upon all the inhabitants of the land, ver. 6, 10. For an account of these terrible destroyers, we refer the reader to the note on Exod. x. 4. Houbigant begins the second verse, after the Chaldee and LXX, thus; *Lo! a mighty people and a strong spread themselves like the morning upon the mountains: there hath not been, &c.*

Ver. 5. Shall they leap, &c.] *Shall they make a sound; as the noise of a flame of fire devouring the stubble.* Bochart has shewn abundantly how this description agrees with the locusts. He tells us from several authors, that they fly with a great noise, as St. John also describes them, Rev. ix. 9. that they may be heard at six miles distance; and that when they are eating the fruits of the earth, the sound of them is like that of a flame driven by the wind. See Chandler.

Ver. 6. Before their face, &c.] *At their approach the people tremble: all faces contract paleness.*

Ver. 7, 8. They shall run, &c.] Bochart again shews how exactly this description agrees with the locusts; first, *They shall run.* Now their manner of fighting is thus described; they strike or wound, not as they stand, but as they run. Secondly, *They run as mighty men*: what are more innumerable or strong than locusts, says St. Jerome, whom no human pains can resist? Thirdly, *They shall march every one in his way, and not break their ranks*: and in the next verse, *Neither shall one thrust nor press his comrade.* St. Jerome tells us, "I lately saw in this province, that when the swarms of locusts come, they fly in such exact order by the disposition and command of God, that every one keeps his place, like the squares in a chequered pavement, and does not vary from it so much as a point or a nail's breadth." The same is observed by other writers cited by Bochart: and what is farther remarkable, before

9 They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief.

10 The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining:

11 And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?

12 ¶ Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and

with fasting, and with weeping and with mourning:

13 And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

14 Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him: even a meat-offering and a drink-offering unto the LORD your God?

15 ¶ Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly:

16 Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children,

before the body of them come to any place, they send scouts and messengers as it were to view the ground, and measure it out for their use; as the same last-mentioned writer remarks from Sigibertus, concerning the locusts which destroyed France in the year 874. The meaning of the last clause in ver. 8. *When they fall upon the sword, &c.* is, that *swords shall be no match for them*: such being their natural lightness and hardness, that though they shall fall on them they shall not be wounded. See Rev. ix. 9. and Chandler.

Ver. 9. They shall run to and fro] Shall range about. Bishop Warburton observes, that the fine conversion of the subjects in Joel is remarkable. The prophecy is delivered in the first chapter; *Awake, ye drunkards, &c.* and repeated in the second; *Blow, ye the trumpet, &c.* In the first chapter the locusts are described as a people: *For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number.* But, that we may not be mistaken in the primary sense,—the plague of locusts; the ravages described are the ravages of insects; chap. i. 7. In the second chapter, the hostile people are described as locusts; ver. 2—9. But, that we may not mistake the secondary sense, namely, the invasion of a foreign enemy, they are compared, we see, to a mighty army. This art in the complexture of the prophecy, is truly divine, and renders all chicane to avoid a double sense ineffectual; for in some places of the prophecy, dearth by insects must needs be understood; in others, desolation by war; so that both senses are of necessity to be admitted: and here let me observe, that had the commentators on this prophecy but attended to the nature of the double sense, they would not have suffered themselves to have been so embarrassed, or have spent so much time in freeing the prophet from an imaginary embarrassment (though at the expence of the context) on account of the same prophecies having in one part that signification primary, which in another is secondary: a circumstance, which is so far from inaccurate, that it gives the highest elegance to the discourse; and joins the two senses so closely, as to obviate all pretence for a division, to the injury of the sacred writer. See Div. Leg. book vi. sect. 6. We may just observe, in confirmation of what has been here advanced,

that the 10th and 11th verses cannot with any great propriety be understood literally of locusts, but of the destruction by the Chaldeans. See the note on Isai. xiii. 9—12. Some read the 10th verse throughout in the present tense: *The earth quakes, the heavens tremble—the sun and moon become dark, &c.*

Ver. 11. Before his army, &c.] *Before his army, that his camp may be very great, that it be strong to execute his command for the day, &c.*

Ver. 13. And rend your heart, &c.] The rending of garments was used by almost all the ancients, as a token of deepest sorrow. The expression before us is a proper Hebraism; and the truest sense of it is, *Rend your hearts, and not your garments only.* The prophet does not forbid the external appearances of grief and mourning, but on the contrary requires them; as is plain from the foregoing verse, and the 16th and 17th. But he cautions them against an external, hypocritical show of sorrow, and exhorts them to *rend their hearts*, that is, to cherish that *broken and contrite spirit*, that sincere and unfeigned repentance for their sins, from which the rending of their garments ought to proceed, with which it should be accompanied. See Hosea, vi. 6. We might close this verse at the words, *Of great kindness*; and begin the 14th thus, *And he that repents him of iniquity, how knows he, but he [God] may return, and repent, and may cause a blessing to be left after him, even a bread-offering, &c.* But Dr. Chandler reads the 14th verse, *Who knows but he [God] will return and repent, and cause to leave so much plenty behind him, that there may be a meat-offering and a drink-offering to Jehovah your God?* However, Houbigant thinks all this is harsh; and accordingly he renders the verse, *Who will consider, return, and repent, that he may leave him a blessing, &c.*

Ver. 16. Sanctify the congregation] We read in Exod. xix. 10. of God's commanding the people to sanctify themselves. This sanctification consisted in their solemn preparation to come before God, by washing themselves and their clothes, cleansing themselves from all legal impurities, &c. as may be seen in ver. 14, 15. of that chapter. In like manner, the prophet here exhorts the people to a solemn attendance at the temple of God; to fast, and

mouth,

and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.

17 Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?

18 ¶ Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people.

19 Yea, the LORD will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen:

20 But I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost

sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill favour shall come up, because he hath done great things.

21 ¶ Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things.

22 Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig-tree and the vine do yield their strength.

23 Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately; and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.

24 And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil.

25 And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the canker-worm, and the caterpillar, and the palmer-worm, my great army which I sent among you.

mourn, and pray before him; and therefore commands the people to be *sanctified*; that is to say, to prepare themselves for this humiliation, as well by cleansing themselves from all legal impurities, as by contrition of heart; and by abstaining from all sensual pleasures, however innocent and allowable at other times, as is much more than intimated by the last clause of the verse. Absolute self-denial is but a reasonable preparation to keep a day of solemn humiliation before God for national sins or calamities. This kind of abstinence was even recommended among the heathens, as a necessary preparation for solemn worship. See Herod. lib. ii. c. 64. Tibull. lib. ii. eleg. 1. 2 Chron. xx. 13. 1 Cor. vii. 5. and Chandler.

Ver. 17. Between the porch and the altar] This porch seems to be the same with that mentioned 1 Kings, vi. 3. which was twenty cubits long, and overlaid within with pure gold, 2 Chron. iii. 4. This porch separated the temple from the court of the priests; in which court was the altar of burnt-offerings; and between this altar and the porch of the sanctuary was the station of the priests when they ministered to Jehovah. It was common among the Jews to have certain forms of prayer or praise prescribed to the priests, at their public ministrations. Such was this delivered by the prophet, *Spare thy people, &c.* Upon which St. Jerome observes very well, that it opens the mystery, and manifestly shews what that *strong* and mighty nation is, which was represented under the locusts; namely, *the heathen*; the nations who were the enemies of the Jews. See Chandler and Pocock.

Ver. 20. But I will remove, &c.] The locusts are here styled the *northern army*, because they entered the land at *Hamath*, one of the northern borders, and passed quite through it till they came to the southern parts about the

Dead Sea, which have been barren and desolate ever since the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah; and there they were either famished, or perished in the water. This is Lowth's opinion: but to this it is objected, that the locusts are, in every other place, said to come from the east. The *northern army* is an appellation given to the army of Nebuchadnezzar, as coming from Babylon, a city lying to the north of Jerusalem. The prophet speaks of this army under the similitude of the locusts. See Chandler, and Sharpe. By the words *east* and *utmost*, are implied the *Dead* and *Mediterranean Seas*. Instead of, *Because he hath done*, we may read, *Although he hath done, &c.*

Ver. 21. Fear not, O land, &c.] In the former part of this prophecy the land is elegantly represented as mourning, the beasts groaning, and the herds of cattle as greatly distressed; the rivers of water as dried up, and the pastures of the wilderness as all consumed. In the same elegant strain the prophet calls upon the land to *rejoice*, and the beasts of the field to be glad; because the rain should descend, the trees yield their increase, the earth its plenty, and every thing minister to the joy and comfort of the inhabitants: so that though the *threatening* ran, that the land (which looked, before the locusts invaded it, like the garden of Eden) should appear behind them like a desolate wilderness; the *blessing* intimated upon their repentance is, that the desolate wilderness should be again turned into a garden of Eden, and abound with every thing for usefulness and pleasure. See the *Observations*, p. 23.

Ver. 23. The former rain moderately] *The former rain* in benignity: or, as Houbigant renders it, *A teacher of righteousness*. See *Observations*, p. 22.

Ver. 25. And I will restore to you the years, &c.] Concerning these years, it is said in chap. i. 4. that *the locusts shall*

26 And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed.

27 And ye shall know that I *am* in the midst of Israel, and *that I am* the LORD your God, and none else, and my people shall never be ashamed.

shall eat what the palmer-worm hath left, &c. Chandler renders it, *I will recompense to you the years, &c.* God, says Houbigant, restored fertility to the land, when he drove from Judæa the northern people, or the army of Sennacherib, who came after the locusts had destroyed Judæa, as the prophet had foretold in the 6th verse of the former chapter.

Ver. 26. And ye shall eat in plenty, &c.] And ye shall certainly eat, and be satisfied, &c. Dr. Sharpe observes, that these words cannot, with any degree of sense, or propriety of language, be interpreted of any other joyful event, than the return of captive Israel and Judah from Babylon.

Ver. 28. Afterward] Kimchi says, that this is the same as, *In the last days*, Isai. ii. 2. and it is explained by St. Peter, Acts, ii. 17. of the times of the Gospel. The rabbies affirm, that wherever the words occur, they denote the time of the Messiah; and therefore they refer this prophecy expressly to his days, and make it descriptive of that event which is spoken of Isai. xi. 9. *The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord.* This is unquestionably the true meaning; and though the things here prophesied of were not to happen till several ages afterwards, yet was the prophecy highly proper to encourage the minds of the pious Jews; as it was an assurance to them, that let them be brought ever so low, by this or any other calamity, yet God would preserve them a people, till all the promises made to their forefathers should be actually accomplished; and especially till the Messiah should come, under whom the knowledge of God should spread itself among all the nations of the earth, and the gifts of the Spirit of God should be poured out in a much more abundant manner than ever they were before. See Chandler.

Dr. Sharpe observes, that the prophet Joel first describes the distress of the Jews by drought and famine; and their destruction in the great day of the Lord, the day of darkness and gloominess, the like to which had never been, nor should be any more after it, to the years of many generations. Then the trumpet sounds again, and proclamation is made of the great things which the Lord will do for his people and his land. He will remove from them the northern army, and restore the years that they had lost by the great army which he had sent among them. After this, the usual transition is made to the gospel age, under the second temple. The extraordinary effusion of the Holy Spirit, which then was poured out upon all flesh, is next foretold in the clearest and strongest terms. The other great day of the Lord, the last destruction of Jerusalem, has then its place; and this part of the prophecy closes with some remarkable words, which may be considered as a

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28 ¶ And it shall come to pass afterward, *that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:*

29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

short and comprehensive view of the gracious declarations in the new covenant; ver. 32. The word רוּחַ *ruach*, here used for *Spirit*, often signifies in Scripture those excellent gifts conferred by God on any particular persons; and particularly the gifts of understanding and prophecy, as well as the richest graces on the church at large. See 2 Kings, ii. 9. Isai. ii. 2, 3. Acts, xix. 2, 6. The word *flesh* is to be understood of *man* only, as in Gen. vi. 12. Isai. lxvi. 23. &c. &c. So that this prophecy is evidently very extensive, and intended to comprehend persons of every nation, and of all forts and ranks; as appears from the very next words, *Sons and daughters, &c.* expressions which denote persons of every age and condition. The gifts here promised are, 1. *Prophecy*: a word which is used in a very large sense in the sacred writings. See the note on Numb. xi. 25. 2. *Dreaming of dreams*: a method by which God made known his will to the patriarchs and prophets, by impressing their minds while they were asleep, with the things that he intended to communicate: sometimes directly, without any parabolical representation, which was a *pure dream*; as to Solomon and others: sometimes under such representations and images, as might either be a pure vision, or a vision and dream mixed; as in the case of Pharaoh, Joseph, Daniel, and others. 3. *Visions*: which sometimes agree with dreams, as they are a representation of divine things to persons in a deep sleep; but differ in this, that the pure dream is always a communication from God to the mind, without the impression of sensible objects on the imagination, and always in a deep sleep; whereas the *vision* is constantly impressed upon the imaginative faculty, and sometimes happens to the prophet while he is awake. Thus Elijah had a vision from God upon mount Horeb; and St. Peter, to reveal to him that the proselytes were to be admitted into the Christian church: St. John seems to have received all his *Revelations* in the same manner. In these *visions* or *trances* all the external senses seem bound up, that the mind may be wholly attentive to the divine impressions. It is added in the last place, *In these days I will pour out my Spirit on the men-servants and the maid-servants*; to denote that rich and poor, bond and free, persons of all ranks, should be favoured with all the various gifts of that Spirit; as is plain from the beginning of the prophecy; *I will pour out, &c.* After which the prophet explains the effusion,—by the grant of prophecy, dreams and visions, accompanied with all gospel-grace. What he says, therefore, concerning the men and maid-servants, clearly signifies, that they also shall have the Spirit in all its gifts, as plentifully as the Jews themselves. See Dr. Chandler, and the dissertation at the end of his commentary on Joel. But we must never forget, that on the day

3 U

30 And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood and fire, and pillars of smoke.

31 The sun shall be turned into darkness,

and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.

32 And it shall come to pass, *that* whoever shall call on the name of the LORD

of Pentecost, when these rich gifts of the Spirit were poured out, the gospel dispensation or peculiar kingdom of Christ was opened; and greater measures of divine grace were poured forth on the church than ever were given before; and that this abundant measure of the Spirit of grace still continues to be efused on all Christian believers, and will be the grand means of ushering in and establishing the universal reign of Christ upon earth.

Ver. 30. And I will shew wonders, &c.] Whoever will be at the pains to compare our Saviour's prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, Matt. xxiv. with the present passage, will have no doubt concerning the application of this part of Joel's prophecy.

Ver. 32. Whosoever shall call, &c.] This expression seems to have a double meaning in the sacred writings. Sometimes it signifies to call oneself by or to be called by the name of Jehovah: thus, Gen. iv. 26. As it is in the margin of our Bibles; *Then began men to call themselves by the name of the Lord;* that is to say, to be called the sons of God, in opposition to those who were called the sons of men. See Gen. vi. 2. Judg. xviii. 29. Isai. xlv. 5. xlviii. 1. In other places, the expression unquestionably signifies solemn invocation or worship of God; and in whatever sense you understand it, the meaning is, that all *Christians*, who are named from Christ their Lord, or all the true worshippers of God, should escape the calamities of this dreadful day. It is added, *In mount Sion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance.* This terrible day was to fall on mount Sion and Jerusalem; nevertheless the true worshippers of God should escape thence, and not share in the common calamity. Nor should this be the case only of those who dwelt in Jerusalem; *but of all the rest whom Jehovah should call:* the remainder of all the true worshippers and obedient and faithful followers of God, not only in Jerusalem, but in all other places, should, according to the promise of God, have a merciful escape, and a gracious *deliverance* afforded them. See Matt. xxiv. 21, 22. All these predictions were abundantly accomplished in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. See Chandler.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The heavy judgment coming upon the people of Israel is here set forth.

1. The alarm is spread. *Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain,* to give notice of the invading foe, and to prepare them for the approaching danger. This was the priest's office, who, as the watchman upon Zion's walls, must warn sinners of the wrath of God ready to light upon them, and urge them, while there is hope, to flee from it. The judgments at the door should make the people tremble, and the fatal day is nigh, to punish the transgressors, *a day of darkness, &c.* when the very sun should be obscured with clouds of locusts; or, as these phrases may signify, the deepest calamities would overtake them; *as the morning spread upon the mountains,* coming suddenly, and spreading universally and irresistibly;

or the air should be so darkened with the swarms of insects, that at mid-day the light should not exceed the dawning of the morning.

2. The army is marshalled in battle array. *A great people and a strong,* supplying by multitude what they singly want in might; nor were there ever before, nor shall there be hereafter, such ravages committed by them in Judæa. As they advanced, they swept the land as with the besom of destruction; and behind them the country looked black and barren as if fire had devoured it; so that what was as the garden of Eden before them, quickly appeared as *a desolate wilderness,* nothing escaping their devouring jaws. Swift and bold as horses, they rushed on; and, as rattling chariots over the rugged mountains, the sound of them was heard afar off, leaping as they advanced, and terrible as the roaring of devouring fire, which spreads resistless on every side; marching firm, embodied in exact battalion, as soldiers keep their ranks. In vain against them the sword is drawn; they elude the stroke, or those that fall are not found wanting, so vast is their multitude. Not only the country is devoured by them, but the cities are covered, the houses are filled with them; and these were the forerunners and emblems of the Chaldean armies, which should in like manner spread desolations on every side, destroy the country; sack the cities, plunder and make captive the inhabitants, and leave Judæa a wilderness without man or beast. *Note;* (1.) There is *no fence against God's judgments.* (2.) The sound of them in other lands should be to us loud calls to repentance.

3. Great would be the terror spread through the land by these invaders. The people, seized with pangs as a woman in travail, would be in the deepest consternation, and every face *gather blackness,* livid as the corpse from which the spirit is fled. *The very earth shall quake before them, the heavens tremble,* and the luminaries thereof *be darkened,* obscured by the locusts; or figuratively, it bespeaks the deep distress of the inhabitants, from the king upon the throne to the lowest of the people. And well indeed may they tremble who see the wrath of God thus revealed against them. For,

4. This is his doing. It is *his army,* that marches under his direction, animated by his voice, who, as their captain, leads them on to victory, too numerous to be opposed, too strong to be resisted, since they are sent to execute his word. *For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible, and who can abide it?* *Note;* The impenitent sinner must needs perish, unable to oppose the arm of Omnipotence, or bear up under the strokes of his fierce anger.

2dly, To oppose these desolating judgments, when they came, were vain; to avert them, before they arrived, was yet possible; and the way is prescribed:

1. By a penitent return to God.

[1.] Let a solemn fast be proclaimed, (see chap. i. 14.) and all summoned to appear before God, from the highest to the lowest, from the hoary head to the babe that sucks the

shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD

hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

the breast; the universal judgment called for deep and universal abasement: nor must the bridegroom or bride be absent. In public calamities all private joys must be swallowed up.

[2.] Let the priests, with deepest mourning and most fervent supplications, pour forth their complaints to God, and, standing between the porch and the altar, on which now no sacrifices smoked, with tears of heartfelt woe cry unto God, if mercy yet is to be found, *Spare thy people, O Lord*: they plead that relation which, though an aggravation of their sin, yet ministers a ground for hope that yet the Lord would not utterly cast them off; *and give not thine heritage to reproach*, by driving them into strange countries to seek for food, or suffering them, thus impoverished, to fall an easy prey into the hands of their enemies, *that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?* Not only their lives and characters but God's glory was concerned; and for his own great name's sake, though they deserved no favour, they must plead for his interposition. *Note*: (1.) The ministers of God must themselves be deeply affected, if they would affect the hearts of their people. (2.) Mercy is all that a miserable sinner can ask at God's hand.

[3.] Let the people join their ministers with prayers and tears, and heartfelt humiliation, and (without which every outward expression of distress is but hypocrisy) *turn unto the Lord their God* in simplicity and truth, deeply convinced of the evil of their sins, and truly abhorring themselves in the view of them; putting away the accursed thing, and cleaving to the Lord with full purpose of heart, through his grace, to approve henceforward their unshaken fidelity to him. In this way, sinners as we are, a door of hope will yet be opened for us.

2. The most powerful arguments are suggested to engage them hereunto. He is called *the Lord your God*, who has not yet disclaimed his relation to them, *for he is gracious and merciful*; and, though highly provoked, he is not inexorable; he delights not in the death of a sinner; *slow to anger, unwilling*, even after repeated offences, *to destroy the guilty*; waiting with astonishing patience; *and of great kindness*, ready to receive him the moment he relents and returns; *and repenteth him of the evil*, changing the afflictive dispensations of his providence towards the penitent, and, instead of wrath, thinketh upon mercy: and surely nothing can break the obdurate heart, if such tender pity and undeserved compassion lead us not to repentance. *Who knoweth if he will return and repent*, averting the heavy temporal calamities threatened, of which they might entertain good hope if they turned truly to him, *and leave a blessing behind him*, not as departing from them, but as coming to their rescue, and staying the ravages of the locusts; *even a meat-offering and a drink-offering unto the Lord our God?* for their desires were more intent on having God's altar supplied than their own tables covered; and this was a gracious evidence of the truth of their repentance.

3. God gives them the strongest assurance that he will hear their prayer, and will both help them and glorify himself. *He will be jealous for his land*, for his great name's

sake, and *pity his people* in their deep distress. Their plenty shall be restored, their reproach be removed, and their devourers destroyed, and cast in heaps into the sea, filling the air with the stench of their putrid carcases; *because he hath done great things*, because of the mischief they have occasioned; or, *for he will do great things*, God will make bare his arm for their rescue, and do for them the great things promised in this and the following verses. Some apply this to the destruction of Sennacherib's army; and probably these locusts, both in their invasion and destruction, were a figure of the Assyrians. *Note*: God will assuredly hear when his believing people cry; and their enemies and his shall know the fierceness of his wrath.

3dly, Many great and precious promises are here added, for the comfort and joy of the faithful people of God.

1. Their fears shall be all removed. The Lord will do great things for them; rescuing them wonderfully from the hands of every enemy, whether the locusts or Chaldeans; as he will also save the souls of sincere believers in Christ Jesus from every spiritual foe, and deliver them from the fears of guilt, and the powers of corruption.

2. Their joys shall be restored. *Their temporal comforts shall abound*; the devastations of the locusts shall be repaired; the pastures which had been devoured shall spring afresh, watered with the dew of heaven. The rain, moderately descending in its season, shall fertilize the soil, and cause their corn, their vineyards, their olive and fig-trees, to shoot vigorously, and bring forth fruit abundantly; so that their garners should be filled, and their fats overflow. And, what is far better than even their restored plenty, he will give them *spiritual consolation*, and the sanctified enjoyment of their comforts. They shall rejoice in the Lord their God, ascribing to him the praise of all their mercies, and happy in a sense of his love and favour. By experience now they shall be brought to know God's gracious presence in the midst of them, and that he alone is God, even *their God, and none else*; all idols being utterly rejected by them, and his great name alone adored and exalted: and this will be most eminently the case, when that *teacher of righteousness* (as the words may be rendered, instead of *the former rain moderately*) whom God would send, even the divine Messiah, should come, and by his own obedience unto death work out, and in his Gospel direct us to, that great atonement and redemption, which is the grand source of every believer's joy.

3. They shall never be ashamed; never have cause to be so, through want of food, as before: or rather, the Lord their confidence will never disappoint the hope of his faithful people; he will be their rock and refuge in every time of need.

4. The very beasts that groaned and cried to God, shall have the cause of their fears and cries removed. *The pastures of the wilderness do spring*; even to them hath God respect, for his mercies are over all his works, Jonah, iv. 11.

4thly, The promises from ver. 28. to the conclusion of the chapter, evidently look forward, in the first place, to the introduction of the Gospel, and its establishment in the

C H A P. III.

God's judgments against the enemies of his people. God will be known in his judgment: his blessing upon the church.

[Before Christ 800.]

FOR, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem,

2 I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and *for* my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land.

3 And they have cast lots for my people;

world; and, secondly, to those last and glorious days which shall precede and usher in the universal reign of Christ: and in all the former troubles of the people of God, the prospect of these blessed days was a great support under their afflictions.

1. There shall be a most plentiful effusion of the Spirit, as on the apostles at the day of Pentecost, to which this prophecy is expressly applied, Acts, ii. 16, 17. and afterwards upon all flesh, Gentiles as well as Jews, who should be made partakers of the Holy Ghost, both of his miraculous powers, as well as the ordinary gifts and graces that he bestows; the latter of which still continue, though the former have ceased, yet perhaps not for ever. Old and young, persons of both sexes, should alike partake of this blessing, and even the meanest servants and handmaidens not be excluded from this unspeakable gift. Thus they should be enabled to prophesy; either to foretell things to come, as Agabus, the daughters of Philip, and others, Acts, xi. 28. xiii. 1. xxi. 9, 10.; or to speak the truths of God to the edification of others; or to join in his praises with enlarged hearts; in all of which senses the word *prophecy* is used.

2. A scene of dreadful prodigies shall follow, which had their primary accomplishment in the dreadful ravages of the Roman army in Judæa, and the strange sights and appearances in the air which ushered in the destruction of Jerusalem, and will also precede the final coming of the eternal Judge, and usher in *the great and the terrible day of the Lord*. Happy would it be for the sinner, if the tremendous views of that awful day's approach might alarm his conscience, and awaken his concern, to fly to the bosom of Jesus for shelter from the wrath to come, that he may be hidden there in the day of the Lord's fierce anger.

3. The faithful in that great day are secured from fear of evil. *It shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered*, as those were who believed in Jesus, and fled to Pella on the approaching siege of Jerusalem. And, more generally, this must be extended to all Christ's faithful people, who in and through him find salvation from all the great enemies of their souls; and, waiting upon him by faith in ceaseless prayer, obtain from him help in every time of need. *For in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, in the gospel church, shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, who is faithful to all his promises; and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call, when he collects his ancient people from all their dispersions, cuts off all the obstinately impenitent, and brings in thefulness of the Gentiles.* Blessed and happy are they who have a part in this salvation: may my lot be with them!

C H A P. III.

Ver. 1. For, behold, in those days, &c.] As the foregoing promise of the Spirit was an assurance to the Jews, that, notwithstanding they might be reduced very low by their enemies, yet they should not be destroyed as a nation till God had accomplished all the great prophecies relating to the Messiah; so he in this chapter assures them of a deliverance from the oppression of their enemies, which they then laboured under; particularly from the Tyrians, Sidonians, Philistines, Egyptians, and Idumæans, who were the neighbouring nations, and had each in their turns invaded them, pillaged their treasures, and led them into captivity. Upon this account God expostulates with them, ver. 2—6. promises the Jews that their captives should return, and that he would cause them to execute his just vengeance on their enemies, who, with all their power and forces, should not be able to deliver themselves; ver. 7—16. That Jerusalem should be taken under his protection, and the Jews enjoy such great prosperity, and see the violence, unrighteousness, and insolence of their enemies so signally avenged, as should cause them to acknowledge the power of *Jehovah* their God, and adore him for his great and unmerited favours towards them; ver. 17. to the end. Houbigant reads this verse, *Behold, after those days, and after that time, &c.* And he supposes that these words refer to the 27th verse of the preceding chapter, as they evidently cannot refer to the times posterior to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.

Ver. 2. I will—gather all nations, &c.] It is very evident from the phrase at the close of the verse, *Who have parted my land*, that all is not to be taken in a very extensive sense. It is to be understood of the neighbouring nations;—*All the heathen round about*, as in ver. 12. In this third and last part of his prophecy, Joel relates what will come to pass in those days, and in that time, when the Lord shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem. He apparently describes the great actions of the Maccabees; and that this is the period of time, to which this part of the prophecy relates, is evident from the raising up the children of Judah and of Jerusalem, whom their enemies had sold to the Greeks; ver. 7. This return happened under Demetrius. The nations gathered in the valley of Jehoshaphat, which was near to Jerusalem, are the Seleucidæ, who were afterwards destroyed in the same valley, which is therefore called *The valley of decision, or of the threshing*.—*Tyre and Sidon, and the coasts of Palestine*, ver. 4. mean the descendants of the ancient enemies of the Jews; who assisted in the destruction and plundering of Jerusalem, and whose posterity were destroyed by the Maccabees. The word יהושפט *Jehoshaphat* signifies, *The Lord judges, or the judgment of the Lord*. See ver. 14. And possibly,

and have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink.

4 Yea, and what have ye to do with me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine? will ye render me a recompence? and if ye recompense me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompence upon your own head;

5 Because ye have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried into your temples my goodly pleasant things:

6 The children also of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold unto the Grecians, that ye might remove them far from their border.

7 Behold, I will raise them out of the place whither ye have sold them, and will

return your recompence upon your own head:

8 And I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off: for the LORD hath spoken it.

9 Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up:

10 Beat your plough-shares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong.

11 Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD.

possibly, says Dr. Chandler, thus translated, the *valley of Jebshaphat* may denote no particular place in the country of Judæa, but only some place where God would execute his vengeance on the enemies of the Jews. Houbigant renders the last clause, *Because they have scattered them among the nations, and have parted my land.* See Chandler, and Sharpe.

Ver. 3. *And they have cast lots for my people*] That is, "They have divided my captive people by lot among themselves, according to the laws of war then in use among mankind." See Nahum, iii. 10. Obad. ver. 11. *They have given a boy for a harlot*; that is to say, they gave a boy as the price of a harlot; and *a girl for wine*; that is, as the price of wine. They put both boys and girls to the most infamous uses: the boys to wait on their harlots; the girls to be ruined by their sellers of wine. The boys are given as a reward for gratifying their vile passions, and the girls as the price of their intemperance. See Chandler.

Ver. 4. *Yea, and what have ye to do, &c.*] *But what have ye to do, &c.* After God by the prophet had put them in mind of their injustice and cruelty towards his people, he now comes to inquire into the reason of so unrighteous a conduct. *But, what have ye to do with me?* The expression denotes the same as that other, so common in the sacred books, *What have I to do with you?*—"What is the reason of your so frequently invading and often plundering my land and people." The next words may be read, *Will ye take your revenge upon me?—But if ye vent your spite upon me, I will swiftly and speedily return your vengeance, &c.* Kimchi paraphrases the whole verse thus; "What is this that ye do even unto me?—Do ye think to be revenged on me, because I have done you evil?—If you say, that you do now of your own accord evil to me, (for he that doth evil to Israel, his imagination is to do evil to me, for they are my sons,) if this be the case, I will soon return your reward on your own heads?" See Chandler.

Ver. 7. *Out of the place whither, &c.*] It is said in the preceding verse, that the Jews were sold to the Grecians.

Therefore this *place* is to be understood principally of Greece; whence the Jews should hasten to the Maccabees, on hearing of their victory.

Ver. 9. *Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles*] God, having foretold these judgments against Tyre and Sidon, the Philistines, and the neighbouring nations, who had used the Jews with injustice and cruelty, proceeds here to confirm his people in the belief of the certainty of their destruction; which, he tells them, should be as sure as if they themselves had gathered them together by proclamation for it: for so are these words, *proclaim ye, &c.* to be understood; not as commanding what they were actually to do, but in order to stir up their attention, and to let them know that God was as certainly preparing to bring this vengeance on their enemies in the course of his providence, as if he had actually sent messengers from the Jews to proclaim it among them. See chap. ii. 1. and Chandler. Instead of, *Prepare war*, Houbigant reads, *Denounce war.*

Ver. 10. *Beat your plough-shares into swords*] He bids them turn all such of their instruments as they used in times of peace, into instruments of war: so Virgil,

Non ullus aratro
Dignus honos: squalent abductis arva colonis,
Et curvæ rigidum falces conflantur in enses.

Dishonour'd lies the plough; the banish'd swains
Are hurried from th' uncultivated plains;
The sickles into barbarous swords are beat.

GEOR. I. ver. 506. WARTON.

Times of peace are on the contrary described thus; *They shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks*: Isai. ii. 4.

Ver. 11. *Thither cause thy mighty ones to come down*] *The Lord shall cast down thy strong ones*: Houbigant. Our translation, however, may be justified. At the ninth verse the proclamation is for the enemies to ascend, Judæa being a high and mountainous situation; and, as God's *mighty ones* were to meet them, the prophet prays, *Thither*, namely, to the appointed place, *cause thy mighty ones to descend*: "Lead thither thy people, thy mighty army, and give them

" the

12 Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about.

13 Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get ye down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great.

14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.

15 The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.

16 The LORD also shall roar out of Zion,

and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.

17 So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more.

18 ¶ And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim.

“the victory over their cruel enemies.” In this view the sense is natural and easy, and the prayer is a proper introduction to the following verses. See Chandler.

Ver. 12. Let the heathen be wakened] The prophet seems to deliver the words of this verse by way of answer to his own prayer: “That God would lead down his people, and give them the victory over their enemies.” *Let the heathen be wakened*, should rather be rendered, *the heathen shall be wakened*: “When they shall find themselves invaded by God’s mighty ones, they shall awaken out of their security, or be forced to leave the employments and pleasures of peace, and come up to battle in their own defence.” The prophet, as is very usual in the Scripture, here explains the meaning of the word *Jehoshaphat*: *There will I sit to JUDGE, &c.* “There will I certainly punish them, and execute the judgment on them which they have deserved;” for the word *שפוט* *shapat*, denotes the whole process of any cause, whether it issue in the acquittal or condemnation of the person impleaded. See the note on ver. 2. and Chandler.

Ver. 13. Put ye in the sickle] God here either calls on his people the Jews to prepare themselves to execute his vengeance, for that the time of it was drawing near; or comforts them by an assurance that he would provide proper instruments to effect it; and this under a metaphorical representation, *Put in the sickle*. He compares the nations to ripened fruits, and the time of their destruction to the time of harvest: *The harvest is ripe*; that is to say, “They are fit for destruction, as the ripened corn is for reaping.” *Come, get ye down*; namely, into the appointed valley, as if they were going into a vineyard to gather grapes. But Houbigant, more agreeably as he thinks to what follows, would read, *Come, tread ye*, namely, the wine-press; *for the press is full, the fats overflow*: that is, as it is immediately explained, *their wickedness is great*; it is come to its full measure. See Rev. xiv. 15, &c.

Ver. 14. Multitudes, &c.] After the prediction of the slaughter of the enemies of God’s people, Joel cries out with prophetic warmth and agitation, *Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!* as if he had said, “See what mighty numbers are brought together for their destruction!” The sentence, thus abrupt and broken, is very strong and

emphatical. Instead of *decision*, Houbigant reads *excision*; and Chandler, very agreeably to the Hebrew word, *the appointed valley*; where God had appointed or determined to execute his judgments.

Ver. 16. The Lord—shall roar out of Zion] This verse may be thus paraphrased; “Thus shall Jehovah take vengeance on the enemies of his people, and make the inhabitants of Zion and Jerusalem to execute his judgments upon them, like a roaring lion devouring his prey. Their destruction shall be as certain, as if they were destroyed by thunders and lightnings from heaven, or swallowed up by an earthquake. But Jehovah shall be a sure refuge to his believing people, and his mighty arm shall save the children of Israel.” See *Isai. xiii. 13. Psal. xiv. 6. lxi. 4.*

Ver. 17. Then shall Jerusalem be holy] That is, “After this, Jerusalem shall be safe under my care, and be no more profaned by the hostile armies of these mine enemies.” These expressions, perhaps, may have a further reference; and as we have found in the former prophets, that, under predictions of deliverances from particular enemies, great and future deliverances also in some remote ages are signified, this possibly may be the case with this latter part of Joel’s prophecy; wherein it has been thought by some (and I doubt not is the case), that he refers to the great and final restoration of the Jews, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be come in.

Ver. 18. The mountains shall drop down new wine] Chandler paraphrases this verse thus: “The consequence of this happy deliverance shall be the utmost plenty; for at this time the vine shall produce the greatest abundance, so that the mountains shall drop down new wine. The hills shall abound with cattle, and, as it were, flow with the plenty of milk which they shall yield. The courts of the rivers shall be no more diverted, but stream down throughout all the land of Judah; and a fountain shall go forth from the house of the Lord, which shall water the distant valley of Shittim, or of *choice cedars*” The expressions here are figurative, and highly poetical; there are many similar to them in Virgil’s fourth eclogue, which the heathen poet, I am persuaded, borrowed from our prophet. Calmet observes, that all this is symbolical, and figurative

19 Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence *against* the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land.

20 But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Je-

rusalem from generation to generation.

21 For I will cleanse their blood *that* I have not cleansed: for the LORD dwelleth in Zion.

figurative of the doctrine of the Gospel; which was to flow forth from Jerusalem, and to water the Gentile world, as a barren and uncultivated land.

Ver. 20. Judah shall dwell for ever] That is, shall subsist a separate kingdom and estate, (as it is explained in the next clause) *from generation to generation*, or, for several generations or years; referring to the Christian church, and the final restoration of the Jews. The words may be understood in their full force.

Ver. 21. For I will cleanse, &c.—cleansed] *For I will avenge, &c. avenged.* Houbigant reads, *I will avenge their blood, and not spare; and the Lord shall inhabit Zion.* The reader will see a variety of different interpretations in Pocock: but none of these, says Dr. Chandler, satisfy me. If we read the former part of the words by way of interrogation, the sense will appear strong and beautiful, and the answer in the latter clause just and striking. "*Judah shall dwell for ever; but shall I declare their blood innocent? Shall I declare their enemies innocent who have shed their blood, and suffer it to go unrevenged?—I will not declare it innocent. I will not absolve the blood which has been spilled, nor suffer it to go unpunished.*" Thus, Exod. xxxiv. 7. it is said of God, that he *will by no means clear the guilty.* "Thus be my vengeance executed upon their enemies; and by taking my people under my especial care, it shall be known that Jehovah is present with them, and favours Zion with his peculiar protection."

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The sufferings of God's faithful people, and the destruction of their enemies, have their appointed periods.

1. *In these days of the Messiah, I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem;* many of them by the preaching of the Gospel being called into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, from the bondage of corruption, more intolerable than that of Egypt or Chaldea. This also may have respect to their recovery from their present dispersion.

2. Their enemies shall be reckoned with; which some apply to Sennacherib and the Assyrians, and suppose the days spoken of to refer to the recovery of the dispersed Jews, who had fled or been taken prisoners on that invasion. Others apply it to the Romans and neighbouring nations, who had severely wasted God's heritage: and some imagine that they see in this prophecy the destruction of the Turkish and Papal powers, assembled to make war against the saints of the most High, after all their former persecutions of them, whose quarrel God will now signally espouse, and avenge their wrongs.

3. The charges lying against these enemies of his people are for their cruelty, robbery, insult, and oppression. They scattered them among the nations; seized and sold them for slaves, particularly to the Grecians, removing them far from

their own land, which they parted among themselves; either Titus parcelled it out to his soldiers, or the neighbouring nations, each seized that portion which lay contiguous to them: *and they have cast lots for my people;* in such vast numbers were they taken captive, and their value so small, that their conquerors gave a boy for the hire of a harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink. Thus in drinking and fornication they squandered the prey that they had taken; the common vices of persecutors. *God's gold and silver they had plundered;* what he had given to his people, and regarded still as his own: and his pleasant things, perhaps the vessels or treasures of his sanctuary, they had carried to the temple of their idols, adding sacrilege and impiety to robbery. Well may God, therefore, expostulate with them, *What have ye to do with me, O Tyre and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine?* which may be put for all the enemies of Christ's church and people in every age. *What have ye to do with me?* how dare you distress my people; what provocation have they given? *will ye render me a recompense?* Have they done you any injury, which you would thus retaliate? No: they were quiet in the land, and had never justly offended them. *Note;* (1.) No sweetness of temper, or amiableness of disposition, can soften the enmity of the wicked against the work of God. (2.) We must not think it strange, if we receive the greatest unkindness from those whom we have ever studied to oblige.

4. God threatens to return their wickedness into their own bosom. *If ye recompense me,* pretending to retaliate wrongs that they had received from God's people; *swiftly and speedily will I return your recompense upon your own head,* and give tribulation to those who troubled them. While God recovered his people from the places whither they had dispersed and sold them, he will sell the children of these his enemies into the hands of the men of Judah; and they, in just retaliation of the wrongs which they have received, shall sell them *to the Sabeans, to a people far off.* And for this the veracity of God is engaged; *the Lord hath spoken it:* the accomplishment of which prophecy some refer to the days of the Maccabees; others, to the future destruction of the persecuting powers of Popery or Mohammedism: certain it is, however, that all the enemies of Christ's church and believing people shall at the last be made their footstool. See the critical notes.

2dly, Commentators greatly differ about the times referred to in the prophecies contained in this chapter from ver. 9. to ver. 17. Some suppose them fulfilled in the destruction of Sennacherib, or the Assyrians, or Antiochus; others, that they look forward to more distant ages, and foretel the ruin of all the antichristian persecuting powers, whether Pagan, Papal, or Mahometan; and many expressions in the *Revelations*, which seem to speak of that event, are borrowed from this chapter. Some still carry the accomplishment farther, and read in it the great day of final

final judgment, when the wicked shall be cast into hell, and the glorified saints of God receive the kingdom of their Father.

1. A defiance is sent to all God's enemies. Let them collect their forces; muster their armies; furnish themselves with weapons; encourage each other for the conflict; unite their assembled legions; hasten to the field of battle, rouse up their courage, and stand in array. *Multitudes, multitudes*, innumerable shall be the host in the valley of decision, the same as the valley of *Jeboshaphat*; which may not mark any particular place, but the end for which they are assembled, *Jeboshaphat* signifying the judgment of the Lord, who will there plead with, condemn, and destroy his enemies; and *the day is near*.

They who refer this to the slaughter of the antichristian powers, Rev. xvi. 14, 16. xix. 18—21. suppose, that they will in the latter day be gathered together in the land of Judæa, to make war on the saints of the Most High, and by some eminent stroke of vengeance from God be utterly consumed.

Applying it to the day of judgment, we may learn, (1.) That it is near, uncertain when, but surely approaching: highly therefore does it concern us to be always ready. (2.) That day will fix our final state, whether for happiness or misery eternal, according to the unerring decisions of the God of truth and judgment.

2. At the prophet's prayer the executioners of vengeance appear. *Cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord*; either the holy angels, or the Christian powers under Christ their leader, going down to the valley of decision, to join battle with their foes. *Put ye in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe: come, get ye down; for the press is full, the fats overflow*; their enemies are ripe for judgment, see Rev. xiv. 18—20. xix. 15—20. and the reason is given, because *their wickedness is great*.

3. To the impenitent sinner, or antichristian foe, that day will be full of horror. *The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining*, according to the description given in scripture of the great day of judgment. Or figuratively it refers to the kings and princes of the earth, that are enemies to the Messiah's reign, who shall be cast down before the armies of the living God, *when the Lord shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem*; appearing on the behalf of his church and people, and spreading terror and dismay among their enemies: *and the heavens and the earth shall shake*; the mightiest will tremble before him; or as at the day of final judgment it will be seen, when the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the earth shall be burnt up. Woe to the wicked! who then shall find no shelter, no rock to hide, no mountain to cover their guilty heads.

4. The saints of God will then triumph and rejoice, for *the Lord will be the hope of his people*; he who had ever been

the object of their hope and trust, will not then disappoint them, but will be their refuge in this day of evil: *and the strength of the children of Israel*; supporting his faithful people through all their conflicts, and crowning them at last with victory. *So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God*, by happy experience of his power and grace; *dwelling in Zion my holy mountain*; in the midst of the church of his faithful saints. *Then shall Jerusalem be holy, or holiness*; all the saints of God shall be perfect, as their Father who is in heaven is perfect: *and there shall no strangers pass through her any more*; no enemy being left to hurt them, no hypocrite or ungodly persons being any longer found among them.

3dly, The great and precious comprized in the conclusion of this chapter, from ver. 18. to the end, may refer to the restoration of the Jews, and above all to the universal reign of Christ.

1. There shall be the most abundant plenty, either of temporal good things, or rather of spiritual blessings, diffused among the faithful. The *wine* and *milk* of gospel-grace should flow down like torrents from the hills, refreshing, strengthening, comforting the members of Christ's church; and from him, the ever-flowing, overflowing fountain, shall the healing streams go forth, watering the valley of *Shittim*, a barren valley beyond Jordan, which may signify the Gentile world, and intimate the fruitfulness which this watering of the sanctuary should produce, and the extent of the Redeemer's grace, even to the most distant corners of the earth.

2. The inveterate enemies of the church shall be destroyed. Egypt and Edom had often shewn their implacable hatred against Judah, and shed innocent blood in the land; but they shall now be made perpetual desolations. And these nations are the figures of the present persecutors of God's people, particularly of *Rome*, called *Egypt* mystically; Rev. xi. 8. and red with the *blood of saints* and martyrs; but blood shall now be given her to drink, together with all the other persecuting powers, Pagan or Mahometan, who will perish together. Or if this be applied to the last great day, then death, sin, and Satan, the most mortal foes of the saints, shall be destroyed together and for ever.

3. The faithful people of God shall in these glorious days enjoy undisturbed repose. *Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation*; to the end of time the church of Christ shall be preserved safe from all the attacks of the gates of hell: or in the eternal state of bliss, the faithful shall dwell safely in mansions of glory. *For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed*; pardoning all their guilt, saving them from the power of all their sins, and destroying the very being of sin in them: *for the Lord dwelleth in Zion*, and therefore his faithful people may comfortably and confidently expect to be made partakers of the fulness of this his great salvation.

THE BOOK
OF THE
PROPHET AMOS.

HE began to prophesy the second year before the earthquake which happened in the reign of Uzziah, and which Josephus, with most of the ancient and modern commentators, refers to this prince's usurpation of the priest's office, when he attempted to offer incense to the Lord. The first of his prophecies, in order of time, are those of the seventh chapter: the others he pronounced in the little town of Tekoa, in the tribe of Judah, four leagues southward from Jerusalem, whither he returned after the event mentioned in the seventh chapter; and where he was a herdsman. It is probable, that he was born within the territories of Israel, and that his mission was directed principally to this kingdom. His first two chapters are against Damascus, the Philistines, Tyrians, Edomites, Ammonites, Moabites, the kingdom of Judah and of Israel. The evils with which he threatens them, refer to the times of Salmaneser, Tiglath-pileser, Sennacherib, and Nebuchadnezzar. He foretold the misfortunes, into which the kingdom of Israel should fall after the death of Jeroboam II. who was then living. He foretold the death of king Zechariah, and the invasion of the lands belonging to Israel, by Pul and Tiglath-pileser, kings of Assyria. He speaks of the ten tribes, and of their returning to their own country. He delivers sharp reproaches against the sins of Israel, against their effeminacy and avarice, their severity to the poor, the splendour of their buildings, and the delicacy of their tables. The time and manner of his death are not known. St. Jerome observes, that there is nothing great and sublime in the style of Amos; and he applies to him those words which St. Paul is pleased humbly to apply to himself, that he was rude in speech, though not in knowledge. His authority, says Bishop Lowth, has occasioned many commentators to represent this prophet as intirely rude, void of elegance, and wanting in all the embellishments of style; whereas any one who reads him with the least attention, will find him, though an herdsman, not a whit behind the very chiefest prophets; almost equal to the greatest in the loftiness of his sentiments, and not inferior to any in the splendour of his diction, and the elegance of his composition: for, indeed, the same heavenly Spirit which inspired Isaiah and Daniel in the palace, inspired David and Amos in their shepherds' tents; always choosing proper interpreters of his will, and sometimes perfecting praise even out of the mouths of babes; now using the eloquence of some, now making others eloquent, for his own great purposes. See his 21st Prelection, and Calmet.

C H A P. I.

Amos sheweth God's judgments upon Syria, upon the Philistines, upon Tyrus, upon Edom, upon Ammon.

[Before Christ 787.]

THE words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king
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of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

2 And he said, The LORD will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither.

3 ¶ Thus saith the LORD ; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof ; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron.

4 But I will send a fire into the house of Hazeel, which shall devour the palaces of Ben-hadad.

5 I will break also the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden : and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir, saith the LORD.

6 ¶ Thus saith the LORD ; For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof : because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver *them* up to Edom :

7 But I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof :

8 And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon, and I will turn mine hand against Ekron : and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord GOD.

9 ¶ Thus saith the LORD ; For three trans-

gressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof : because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant :

10 But I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces thereof.

11 ¶ Thus saith the LORD ; For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof : because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever :

12 But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah.

13 ¶ Thus saith the LORD ; For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof : because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border :

14 But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, with shouting in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind :

15 And their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith the LORD.

CHAP. I.

Ver. 2. The Lord will roar] Some commentators have observed that the prophet Amos makes use of comparisons taken from lions and other animals, because he himself had been conversant in forests and among different animals. Instead of *habitations*, we may read *pleasant pastures*.

Ver. 3. I will not turn away the punishment thereof] I will not revoke it ; that is, the voice which denounced their destruction. Houbigant renders the verse, *After three transgressions of Damascus, I will not bear that which was the fourth ; because, &c.* The prophet first threatens the people of Syria, the capital of which was Damascus, for the several transgressions which they had committed, and particularly for their cruelties exercised against the Israelites by Hazeel and Benhadad. 2 Kings, x. 32. xiii. 7.

Ver. 5. I will break also the bar of Damascus] See 2 Kings, xvi. 9. The *bar* means the *gates* or *fortifications*. Houbigant, instead of, *The house of Eden*, reads *The house of pleasure* ; and for Kir, he translates *Cyrene*.

Ver. 6. For three transgressions of Gaza] Houbigant renders this in the same manner as the third verse ; and so throughout the chapter. Instead of *the whole captivity*, we may read, *a peaceable captivity* ; that is to say, a captivity not taken in war, but by sleight and deceit ; or a *perfect captivity* ; that is, not to be recovered. See ver. 9.

Ver. 12. But I will send a fire, &c.] Teman and Bozrah were two principal cities of Idumea. This expression imports their intire conquest and destruction. The ancient country of the Edomites was afterwards called Arabia Petræa ; whence they were expelled by the Nabatheans, and never could recover it ; but were forced to settle themselves in the southern parts of Judæa. Prideaux.

Ver. 15. And their king, &c.] מלכא *malkam*, which some understand of Melchom, the god of the Ammonites : but the words adjoined, *his princes*, seem rather to point out the king of the country.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The prophecy opens with an account of the writer Amos, an inhabitant of Tekoa, in the tribe of Judah ; a *herdsman*, not brought up in the school of the prophets, nor probably furnished with human literature ; but God can make the foolish things of the world to confound the wise ; and when he speaks, *who can but prophesy* ? chap. iii. 8.

The ten tribes of Israel are chiefly the subject of the prophetic words which God revealed to Amos ; and he saw the thing that he declares with the same evidence and clearness, as if they had been presented before his bodily eyes.

The prophecy is dated in the reigns of Uzziah and Jeroboam

C H A P. II.

God's wrath against Moab, Judah, and Israel. God complaineth of their unthankfulness.

[Before Christ 787.]

THUS saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime:

boam the second, *two years before the earthquake*; a very remarkable event, which happened in Uzziah's reign, probably at the beginning of it. Compare 2 Kings, xv. 1. with 2 Kings, xiv. 23.

2dly, The general tenor of the prophecy before us is intimated in these first words of it. *The Lord will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem*, loud and terrible as the lion roars, or as the voice of mighty thunders. From between the cherubims, his seat of judgment, he denounces his wrath on the enemies of his believing people; *the pastures of the shepherds shall mourn*, terrified with the sound, *and the top of Carmel shall wither*, scorched with the flashing lightnings; or, as it is intimated chap. iv. 7. consumed with drought.

The charge and sentence against these nations are nearly the same. Their multiplied iniquities and idolatries, signified by *three and four transgressions*, and above all their persecution and oppression of God's heritage, cried for vengeance against them; and God, as the prophet declares, had determined their doom; for he spake not of himself, but *thus saith the Lord*, able to execute all the threatenings of his word; and, in this instance, solemnly engaging to do so, *I will not turn away the punishment thereof*, the sentence is gone forth, irreverfible, immutable.

1. Damascus, the capital of Syria, is brought to the bar: besides the general charge of multiplied transgressions, her peculiar iniquity was, that *they have thrashed Gilead with threshing-instruments of iron*, so terribly had Hazael ravaged that part of the country, 2 Kings, x. 32, 33. xiii. 3—7. The wrath of God, therefore, as devouring fire, shall consume the royal palaces and temples of Syria, and the invading enemy besiege and force their way into Damascus, the seat of empire; they shall cut off *the inhabitant from the plain of Aven*; a delightful valley near it, the scene of their idolatry, *and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden*, some pleasure-house probably of the kings of Syria; *and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir*, saith the Lord, one title of whose word shall not fail. See the accomplishment of the prophecy, 2 Kings, xvi. 9.

2. Gaza, a chief city of the Philistines, is next found guilty and punished. *Because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom*: the event referred to seems to be that recorded 2 Chron. xxi. 17. when they ravaged and plundered the country, and seized all Jehoram's family except one son, and all his substance; for which the chief cities of Philistia, with the nobles and

2 But I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kirioth: and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet:

3 And I will cut off the judge from the midst thereof, and will slay all the princes thereof with him, saith the LORD.

4 ¶ Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because

inhabitants, are doomed to destruction, and *the remnant of them shall perish*; God will leave them neither root nor branch; and such will at last be the fate of all the enemies and persecutors of God's people.

3. Tyre, like the other neighbours of Israel, notwithstanding *the brotherly covenant* which had subsisted of old between Solomon and Hiram, spared them not in the day of their calamity, but *delivered up the whole captivity to Edom*, either such as they had seized in some inroad into the country, or those who had fled to Tyre for shelter from the invasion of their enemies; these they delivered up, or sold for slaves to their implacable enemies the Edomites: but the proud walls and palaces of Tyre shall be overthrown in just vengeance for such unkindness; which was executed by Nebuchadnezzar after a thirteen years' siege. *Note*; Unkindness is doubly grating from those of whom we had just reason to expect every act of friendship.

4. Edom, with hereditary hatred, persecuted the seed of Jacob; and, though brethren in blood, yet in enmity most inveterate, they *pursued them with the sword*, 2 Chron. xxviii. 17. and were ever ready to do them all possible mischief; but it shall be returned upon their own heads, and their cities and palaces shall be destroyed; as was done by Nebuchadnezzar, and afterwards more terribly by the Maccabees, 1 Mac. v. 28. *Note*; (1.) The enmity which arises between nearest relations has usually peculiar malignity. (2.) Such enmity is exceedingly sinful, and will provoke exemplary vengeance against the offenders and the implacable.

5. The children of Ammon, with Rabbah their capital, are devoted to ruin, and their king and princes doomed to an ignominious captivity; their judgment shall be severe, sudden, and irresistible, as their crimes were atrocious; *they have ripped up the woman with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border*, with most inhuman cruelty massacring the inhabitants, without pity, remorse, or distinction of age, sex, or condition. *Note*; (1.) Covetousness and cruelty are twin sisters; and the inordinate love of money is often seen to harden the heart against all the feelings of humanity. (2.) It is righteous in God, to give those to the spoil whose substance is the gain of oppression and injustice.

C H A P. II.

Ver. 1. Because he burned the bones, &c.] "That not even the ashes of the bones might remain, or be distinguished from lime." See 2 Kings, iii. 27.

Ver. 3. I will cut off the judge] "I will so destroy this nation,"

3 X 2

they have despised the law of the LORD, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked :

5 But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.

6 ¶ Thus saith the LORD ; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof ; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes ;

7 That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek : and a man and his father will go in unto the *same* maid, to profane my holy name :

8 And they lay *themselves* down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar, and they drink the wine of the condemned *in* the house of their god ;

9 ¶ Yet destroyed I the Amorite before

them, whose height *was* like the height of the cedars, and he *was* strong as the oaks ; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath.

10 Also I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite.

11 And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. *Is it* not even thus, O ye children of Israel ? saith the LORD.

12 But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink ; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not.

13 Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed *that is* full of sheaves.

14 Therefore the swift shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, neither shall the mighty deliver himself :

15 Neither shall he stand that handleth the

“ nation, that there shall not be in it king, governor, or chief.” For the name of *judge* is here used for all in authority. Compare this prediction with that in the 48th of Jeremiah.

Ver. 5. I will send a fire upon Judah] The war commenced in Judah, at the end of the reign of Jotham son of Uzziah, when the Lord sent against him Rezin king of Assyria, and Pekah king of Israel. See, for the history here alluded to, 2 Kings, xv. 37. xvi. 7. xviii. 7. and 2 Chron. xxviii.

Ver. 6. Because they sold the righteous] That is to say, they received the money as a bribe, to condemn the just ; and for a little paltry gain,—for a pair of sandals, they sacrificed the interests and the cause of the poor. It is a proverbial manner of speaking, similar to that in Ezek. xiii. 19. See also Joel, iii. 3. and chap. viii. 6. of our prophet. The author of the *Observations* remarks, that Maillet speaks *diminutively* of the *cobéal*, or the sandals of the ladies, which are carried in their nuptial processions, with the rest of the bride's furniture ; though, according to his account, they are not wholly without ornament. *Shoes* perhaps of this kind are here referred to ; where shoes have been commonly, and as should hence seem justly, understood to mean something of small value. “ The Turkish officers, and also their wives, (says Raulin, speaking of Tripoli on the coast of Syria,) go very richly clothed with flowered silks artificially made, and mixed of divers colours. But these clothes (he observes) are commonly given them by those who have causes depending before them, (for they do not love to part with their own money,) to promote their cause, and to be favourable to them.” We seem here to have a picture of that corruption of the Jewish judges, which Amos

complains of. *Silver* made them pervert the judgment of the righteous ; nay, so mean a piece of finery, as a pair of wooden sandals for their wives, would make them condemn the innocent poor, who could not afford to make them a present of equal value. Chap. viii. 6. may possibly in like manner be understood of the rich defrauding the poor ; knowing that if those poor complained, they could carry their point against them for a little *silver*, if not for a pair of *cobéal*. *Observations*, p. 244.

Ver. 7. That pant, &c.] *That stamp upon, or tread upon the heads of the poor, in the dust of the earth, &c.* Houbigant.

Ver. 8. And they lay themselves down, &c.] Amos here reproves the Israelites for three abuses. The *first*, that they kept the clothes which they had received as pledges from the poor, contrary to the law, which commanded that the clothes received in pledge should be returned by the going down of the sun. See Exod. xxii. 26. The *second*, that they made feasts in the houses of their gods, in the temples of their idols or golden calves ; for then they no longer came to the temple at Jerusalem ; and, as if to insult the holiness of God's laws, and to carry the marks of their iniquity even to the feet of their altars, they sat them down in their temples, upon the garments which they had received in pledge from the poor. The *third* abuse is, that they caroused at the expence of those whom they had unjustly condemned.

Ver. 13. Behold, I am pressed under you] *Behold, I will make a pressure under you, as a cart loaded with sheaves makes a pressure ;—ver. 14. And swift shall, &c.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, God's controversy still proceeds :
1. With Moab. Their multiplied transgressions called for vengeance, and one peculiarly heinous is noted : *Be- cause*

bow; and *be that is* swift of foot shall not deliver *himself*: neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself.

16 And *be that is* courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day, saith the LORD.

cause he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime, probably in revenge for the distress to which the king of Edom had reduced him, 2 Kings, iii. 26, 27.; sometime after which, he seized the person of the king of Edom, and burnt him alive; or, having ravaged the country, dug up his bones out of his grave, and burnt them to lime; for which inhumanity God threatens to punish him with an invading foe, who with all the horrid din of war should seize his cities and palaces, put to death the inhabitants, and cut off all the princes and judges of Moab; which was done by Nebuchadnezzar a few years after the destruction of Jerusalem.

2. Judah is brought to the bar, alike in sin with heathen nations, and therefore alike in punishment. Many were her transgressions; but the root of all, and the most criminal, is her revolt from God, that God which the nations around her never knew: *they despised God's law, and kept not his commandments*, rejecting his worship, and disobedient to his holy will; *and their lies caused them to err*, their idols, their false prophets, the lying vanities on which they trusted, and the lying visions in which they believed, as their fathers had done before them, the measure of whose iniquities they filled up. Justly, therefore, is the fire of wrath kindled, and ready to devour the palaces of Jerusalem, Jer. lii. 13. *Note*: If other sinners must perish, apostates surely will fall under double vengeance.

3. Israel brings up the rear; last in judgment, not least in punishment. The crimes of this people were peculiarly aggravated by their relation to God, and therefore are more particularly insisted upon.

[1.] *Their perversion of justice*: before their corrupt judges, the bribe, not the truth, carried the cause; and the meanest gratifications influenced their decisions.

[2.] *Their oppression of the poor*: the very pittance that they possessed, their rulers, as greedy cormorants, panted after; or they wanted to drag them through the dust, to gratify their pride and cruelty; and because they were meek and patient, the more insolently they trampled upon or plundered them, which was a great aggravation of their wickedness.

[3.] *Their abominable impurities, even incest itself*; for where the reins are once cast upon the neck of lawless appetite, men are hurried into excesses which at first they would have started at with horror: and such wickedness in God's professing people, could not but greatly profane his holy name, and give abundant cause to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.

[4.] *Their impiety and idolatry*. *They lay themselves down upon clothes laid to pledge, by every altar*, which, according to the law, should have been restored before sunset, Exod. xxii. 26. but they carried them into their idol-temples, and either slept there on them all night in honour of their deities, or regaled themselves there on the sacrifices they had offered; while the poor were pining in want and nakedness; *and they drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their God*, as if their idolatry could atone for their

injustice, and the price of blood would be an acceptable offering. For such transgressions, no wonder God threatens, *I will not turn away the punishment thereof*.

2dly, The base ingratitude of Israel was among their blackest crimes.

1. God reminds them of what he had done for them. He had destroyed the Amorites before them, though so warlike and mighty a people; had cut them off root and branch, and given them their land for a possession. He had brought them marvellously from the iron bondage in Egypt, had led and fed them in the wilderness by continual miracles. He had honoured them with peculiar marks of favour, raising up *their sons for prophets*, from Moses to that time, and *their young men for Nazarites*, as Samuel and others, whose holy abstinence and self-denial should have taught them to imitate such gracious examples. *Is it not thus, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord?* The facts were notorious beyond contradiction. *Note*: (1.) Faithful ministers are the greatest blessings to a nation; and not to have profited by their labours, will one day bring a heavy reckoning. (2.) When in the heat of youth the power of divine grace is seen effectually restraining the corrupt appetite, and purifying the heart, such examples are peculiarly striking.

2. He upbraids them with what they had done against him. *They gave the Nazarites wine to drink*, enticing or threatening them into a compliance, and *commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not*; while the people turned a deaf ear to them, the rulers and priests persecuted and endeavoured to silence them, chap. vii. 12, 13. These and the like abominations were as a heavy burden which the Lord was weary to bear. *I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves*; though some read this as a threatening, *I will press you or your place as a cart full of sheaves presseth*, intimating the distress which should be brought upon them in the siege of Samaria. *Note*: (1.) The devil and his agents are very busy to draw off the minds of young men from divine things; and they triumph if they can succeed in the debauch of a Nazarite. (2.) They who hate the truth, and exert their power to suppress it, shall shortly answer for it at their peril. (3.) Though God's patience bears long with sinners, he will not bear always; the day of recompence will come, when *he will ease him of his adversaries*, Ita. i. 24.

3. Judgment is pronounced upon them for their sins. He will load *them* with his wrath, who have burdened *him* with their iniquities. The Assyrian, the rod of his anger, shall come, and slight or resistance will be alike in vain: the mighty shall fall, and the swift be overtaken by their swifter pursuers. The most courageous warriors shall flee naked, casting away their armour, and consulting only how they may escape; and this is confirmed by *Thus saith the Lord*, whose denunciations shall have a sure accomplishment. *Note*: The sinner in the day of God will find his case desperate, unable to endure or escape from the wrath that he has provoked.

C H A P. III.

The necessity of God's judgment against Israel: the publication of it, with the causes thereof.

[Before Christ 787.]

HEAR this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying,

2 You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

3 Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

4 Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing?

5 Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him? shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all?

6 Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?

7 Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing,

but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.

8 The lion hath roared; who will not fear? the Lord GOD hath spoken; who can but prophesy?

9 ¶ Publish in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold the great tumults in the midst thereof, and the oppressed in the midst thereof.

10 For they know not to do right, saith the LORD, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.

11 Therefore, thus saith the Lord GOD; An adversary *there shall be* even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled.

12 Thus saith the LORD; As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus in a couch.

C H A P. III.

Ver. 1. Hear this word] This is a continuation of the discourse in the preceding chapter. After having denounced upon the Israelites of the ten tribes the evils there recorded, Amos here speaks to the whole race of Jacob, to the Hebrews of the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel. Afterwards he addresses those of the ten tribes only.

Ver. 2. You only have I known] “You have I chosen from amongst all people, for mine inheritance and my kingdom. I have distinguished you with particular favours and privileges, and therefore expected from you greater returns of gratitude. Disappointing me of these returns, you must expect severer chastisement.”

Ver. 3—8. Can two walk, &c.] The families in these verses have the same meaning, and they all tend to shew that calamities happen according to the appointing, permissive, or suffering will of God; and that prophets prophesy not, without the Lord's speaking to them. Instead of, *Shall one take up a snare, &c.* ver. 5. Houbigant reads, *Is a snare taken from the ground, unless something be caught in it?* Upon the seventh verse we may observe, that there was no great revolution in the affairs either of the kingdoms of Judah and Jerusalem, or in those of the neighbouring nations, which the prophets of God did not foretel, that the Jews might constantly be remembered of their God, either as a rewarder or a punisher. See Houbigant, and Calmet.

Ver. 9. Publish, &c.] God calls upon the heathen to be witnesses of his judgments upon his own people, that

they may take warning thereby: particularly he gives notice to the Philistines and Egyptians, the inveterate enemies of the Jews, that they may assemble themselves, and behold the ravages and oppressions which their insulting adversaries will bring upon the kingdom of Israel, whose capital was Samaria. See Lowth, and Calmet.

Ver. 11. An adversary there shall be, &c.] *An adversary shall surround thy land: he shall cast thee down from thy power, and thy forts or strong places shall be spoiled.* Houbigant.

Ver. 12. In the corner of a bed, &c.] *Sitting in the CORNER*, is in the East a stately attitude, and expressive of superiority: and it has been so universal, that Lord Whitworth assures us, that among the Russians, who lately had many eastern customs among them, they were wont to place the picture of their guardian saint in a corner of their rooms. This circumstance may serve to explain the present passage, which has sadly embarrassed commentators. But the observing that the most honourable place of the eastern divans is the corner, gives this easy explanation, that “just as a shepherd is oftentimes able to save from the jaws of a devouring lion no more than some small piece of the sheep carried off by that beast; so an adversary round about the land of Israel should spoil its palaces, and scarcely any part of it should be recovered out of that adversary's hands, more than the city which sits among the cities of Israel as in the corner of a bed, in the most honourable place; that is, as undoubtedly Samaria did, being looked upon as the royal city.” But to gain more perfectly the acquiescence of the reader's mind in this explanation,

13 Hear ye, and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord GOD, the God of Hosts,

14 That in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him, I will also

explication, it may be requisite to shew, that the Hebrew word מִטָּב *mittab*, which is here translated *bed*, may be understood of a *divan*; which Dr. Ruffel describes as a part of a room raised above the floor, spread with a carpet in winter, and with fine mats in summer; along the sides, says he, are thick mattresses, about three feet wide, covered commonly with scarlet cloth; and large bolsters of brocade, stuffed hard with cotton, are set against the walls (or rails, when so situated as not to touch the walls) for the conveniency of leaning.—As they use no chairs, it is upon these that they sit, and all their rooms are so furnished. This description is perfectly conformable to that of other authors, who agree that on these they take their repasts, and sleep; and that they are very capacious. The word *mittab* certainly sometimes signifies a small, floored, moveable elevation, as in 2 Sam. iii. 31. where we translate it *bier*; but there is no need to suppose that it always signifies such a small moveable thing: it may, for any thing that appears to the contrary, signify the same sort of conveniency as is called at Aleppo a *divan*. These are now used very universally throughout the East; and we know that the people of those countries are very tenacious of their old customs: this therefore, probably, is an ancient one. On the *mittab* they used to sit to eat, as well as to sleep, as we learn chap. vi. 4. 1 Sam. xxviii. 23. Esth. i. 6. vii. 8. from which last passage it appears, that the ancient eastern *mittab* was much larger than the beds which the old Greeks and Romans used in their repasts; since Haman went up, and prostrated himself before queen Esther, on the *mittab* where she was sitting; which it cannot be imagined he would have thought of doing, had the old eastern *mittab* been like a Greek or Roman bed. He would rather have kneeled on the *floor*, or prostrated himself upon it, and kissed the hem of her robe; which he could not do, seated as he was near the corner of a large eastern *mittab*, without going up upon it, which accordingly he did in order to beg for his life. Thus Dr. Pocock tells us, that not only the eastern consul went upon the sofa (which is the same thing with what is called a *divan* at Aleppo) when he visited the *Caia* of the Patha at Tripoli; but those who attended him also, though they placed themselves there in the humble posture of kneeling, so as to rest on their hams. The *stately bed* on which Aholibah is represented as sitting, Ezek. xxiii. 41. seems to mean the floor of an idol temple; for on the floor of such places, it appears from chap. ii. 8. they used to lie down upon clothes or carpets; and the going up to them by steps made it very much resemble an eastern *mittab*. These observations may be sufficient to give us the meaning of the prophet in general; and perhaps this explanation of the first clause may serve to lead us into the sense of the other, which our translators have rendered, *in Damascus in a couch*, but the margin of our Bibles reads, *on the bed's feet*. We cannot suppose that the original word is to be considered as a proper name, and translated *Damascus*, because Israel did not, as far as we know, dwell in any numbers there; though there was a very good understanding between the two kingdoms of

Samaria and Damascus in the times here referred to, as may be seen, Isai. vii. 2. I cannot, however, acquiesce in the marginal reading, *the bed's feet*, which, one would imagine must signify the very reverse of the preceding sentence, and mark out the *lowest place*. Pagnin supposes that the words are to be translated, *And in the corner of a couch*; in which case it would be a sort of repetition of the foregoing thought in other terms; but there may be objections to this interpretation. It seems most natural, upon a collation of the passages where the word עֵרֶס *eres*, occurs, not to understand it as signifying the diminutive of מִטָּב *mittab*, a *couch*, but the *furniture* of an eastern *divan*; and so, where these two words are joined together, they are not to be considered as an *oriental repetition*, but as an agreeable diversification of the thought. Thus Psal. vi. 6. *I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim* (the *divan* on which I am placed); *I waver my couch* (or the *divan furniture*) *with my tears*. Mattresses, or something of that kind, must have been used, without doubt, for sleeping upon in those times; and from chap. ii. 8. it appears that the Israelites used carpets, or something of that sort, in their feasts, as the Easterns do now. This *furniture*, I presume, is to be understood by the term *eres*, which we render *couch*. Perhaps, Deut. iii. 11. where an *eres* is said to be of *iron*, may be thought to overthrow this opinion; but this does not appear to me; the using of furniture for a *mittab*, full of small pieces of iron, like a coat of mail, may surely impress the mind with as strong an idea of the martial roughness of the gigantic *Og*, as the having a bedstead made of iron instead of wood, ivory, or silver. If this sense of the word *eres* be admitted, this clause, to answer the preceding, must signify, in general, the richest furniture of a *divan*, appropriated to persons of the greatest distinction. Nor will there be any great difficulty in the word used, if we suppose the word *Damascus* to signify something made at Damascus, and that this city anciently gave its name to some of its works, as it has certainly done in later times; some of our richest silks being thence called *damasks*. The learned Castalio supposes the word to signify some costly works made at Damascus, and Gen. xv. 2. seems sufficiently to prove it; where Abraham's steward is called *this Damascus Eliezer*,—"this man of Damascus; that is, Eliezer;" and if it may signify a *man* of Damascus, surely it may equally signify a *manufacture* of that city. It is certain, that the prophet Ezekiel, who lived not very long after the time of Amos, represents Damascus as a place of trade, and in particular as trafficking in wine, and what we render *white wool*, Ezek. xxvii. 18. but which may equally well be understood to mean *woollen* fit for the use of nobles. For the word there translated *wool*, appears to be used Ezek. xlv. 17. for wool wrought up, or woollen cloth; and the word which is translated *white*, is used but once more in the Old Testament. See the note on Judg. v. 10. The result of the whole is, that Amos, as it should seem, signifies, that "As a shepherd saves a small portion of a sheep or a goat out of the jaws of a lion; so, though the

visit the altars of Beth-el : and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground.

15 And I will smite the winter-house with

the summer-house ; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the LORD.

“rest of the company shall be miserably destroyed, they shall escape who sit or dwell in Samaria, in the corner of the divan, on the damask mattresses; the royal and most beautified, that is, of all the cities of Israel.” This custom may serve also to illustrate Neh. ix. 22. which may be thus rendered, *Thou didst divide them to the corner*; that is to say, according to the explanation above given, “Thou didst give Sihon and Og into their hands, and the various tribes of the Canaanites; and not only so, but didst give the pre-eminence to Israel, and make them chief among the nations round about them.” It may not, perhaps, be improper here to add, that the word *divide* (in the original חָלַק *cholak*) is used 1 Chron. xxiv. 3. to express David’s appointing the sons of Aaron to their different charges. See the *Observations*, p. 266.

Ver. 15. I will smite the winter-house, &c.] See Jer. xxxvi. 22. The Russian princes used to have their winter and summer palaces, that nation having had many of the eastern usages, and even much of their dress, before the new regulations of Peter the Great. But the winter and summer-houses spoken of by the prophets may be supposed hardly to differ so much from each other as those of the Russians. Probably the account which Dr. Shaw gives of the country-seats about Algiers, though not applied by him to the illustration of these texts, may better explain this affair. “The hills and valleys round Algiers are all over beautified with gardens and country-seats, whither the inhabitants of better fashion retire, during the heats of the summer-season. They are little white houses, shaded with a variety of fruit-trees and ever-greens; which, beside the shade and retirement, afford a gay and delightful prospect toward the sea. The gardens are all of them well stocked with melons, fruit and potherbs of all kinds; and (which is chiefly regarded in these hot climates) each of them enjoys a great command of water, &c.” These are the houses used for retirement from the heat; they might with the greater propriety, therefore, be called *summer-houses*. They are built in the open country, and are small, though belonging to people of fashion; and as such, do they not explain in the most simple manner the words of Amos? *I will smite the winter-house*;—the palaces of the great, in fortified towns: *with the summer-house*, the small houses of pleasure used in the summer, to which any enemy can have access? *And the houses of ivory shall perish*; those remarkable for their magnificence; and the *great houses shall have an end*, saith the Lord; those that are distinguished by their amplitude as well as richness, built as they are in their strongest places, yet shall all perish like their country-seats. See on Nahum, iii. 17.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The prophet solemnly awakens the attention of this stupid people, and calls on them to bear and tremble at the word that the Lord had spoken against them.

1. Their ingratitude will provoke him to punish them. Of all families of the earth, they had been distinguished by his peculiar favour: though so few when they went into Egypt, yet he had multiplied them exceedingly; and brought them up thence with a high hand; and therefore their rebellion against him was the more criminal, and would bring a heavier judgment on their heads. *Note*: None perish under deeper guilt than those who have abused distinguishing means and mercies.

2. In their state of apostasy, no communion can subsist between him and them. *Can two walk together, except they be agreed?* There must be reconciliation before there could be any renewed fellowship; and as they obstinately rejected every call to repent, the enmity must subsist, and their ruin be the consequence. *Note*: God is ready to be reconciled to sinners; but if they reject his mercy, they may expect his wrath.

3. The judgments that God threatened were not pretended, but real; nor should they be removed from them till they were effectually humbled by them. *Will a lion roar in the forest when he hath no prey?* &c. No: they only roar in fight of their prey, or when they have seized it. *Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth where no gin is for him?* No: God hath really spread the snare of affliction for them, nor would take it up fruitless; they would assuredly be snared and taken; nor would the visitation be removed, till the end for which it was sent should be answered. *Note*: The terrors of the Lord are not phantoms raised to frighten the weak, the ignorant, or superstitious, but awful realities which must shortly come to pass.

4. The warnings that they received ought justly to alarm them; and in the sufferings which they were about to feel, God’s hand would visibly appear. *Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid of the approaching foe? or not run together, to consider how to avert the storm?* Thus God, by his prophets, had spread the alarm; and it was at their peril if they disregarded them. *Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?* All affliction comes from his appointing, permissive, or suffering will; and without it not a hair of our head falls. *Surely the Lord God will do nothing but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets*, that before he strikes they may give fair warning to the guilty, and exhort them by a speedy humiliation to avert the impending wrath. *The lion hath roared; who will not fear?* The Lord hath denounced his vengeance against the impenitent; and abundant cause there is that they should tremble before him. *The Lord God hath spoken; who can but prophesy?* Who, that hath the glory of God and the good of men’s souls at heart, can refrain from speaking, when God stirs up his mind with holy zeal, and shews him the dreadful danger about which sinners appear so fearfully unconcerned. *Note*: (1.) In all our trials and troubles, God’s hand is to be acknowledged: it should silence every murmur, when we know

C H A P. IV.

He reproveth Israel for oppression, for idolatry, and for their incorrigibleness.

[Before Christ 787.]

HEAR this word, ye kine of Basban, that *are* in the mountain of Samaria, which oppresses the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink.

2 The Lord GOD hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fish-hooks.

3 And ye shall go out at the breaches, every cow at that which is before her; and ye shall cast them into the palace, saith the LORD.

4 ¶ Come to Beth-el, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years:

5 And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free-offerings: for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.

6 ¶ And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in

that he hath done it or permitted it for our good. (2.) God is very gracious; he never strikes, till, having warned in vain, the sinner proves incorrigible. (3.) Necessity is laid upon those, whose spirit God inwardly moves with affecting views of the miseries of a world that lieth in wickedness, to labour to pluck, if possible, these brands from the burning.

2dly, The neighbouring nations, the princes of Philistia and Egypt, are summoned to hear the trial of Israel, that they may bear witness to the righteousness of the Lord, and in their punishments be themselves admonished. We have,

1. The crimes of which Israel is found guilty. (1.) *Behold the great tumults in the midst thereof*, the outrages committed in lawless riot, and passed off with impunity. (2.) *Behold the oppressed in the midst thereof*: injustice, oppression, rapine, and violence fill every street, and the injured groan without redress; *for they know not to do right*; they had no desire to do it, or by so long a course of wickedness their very judgment was perverted, and their reason blinded: they *store up violence and robbery in their palaces*, thus heaping up wrath against the day of wrath. *Note*; Sin is of so bewitching a nature, that by long practice it gains, as it were, a sanction in the mind; and the conscience utterly defiled yields consent and approbation.

2. The sentence pronounced upon Israel is terrible. *An adversary*, the Assyrian king, shall be raised up, who shall demolish their fortresses, and plunder their palaces of their ill-gotten wealth. The inhabitants shall be massacred and devoured, as a helpless sheep in a lion's mouth; a wretched remnant only shall escape, like the *two legs, or a piece of an ear*, which the shepherd rescues from his consuming jaws; a few out of Samaria, *in the corner of a bed*, so poor that they have only part of a bed to lie on, or who ran thither to hide themselves*; and *in Damascus in a couch*, a mere handful, who fled thither when Samaria was taken; or when this city fell likewise, some few of them narrowly escaped. This sentence God's prophets and priests are called upon faithfully to deliver to *the house of Jacob*, and to assure them that the day will come when *he will visit their transgressions* with deserved vengeance; when their

idoltrous altars at Beth-el should fall, and the horns of them be cut off, nor afford the least refuge to those who fled thither, their idol-confidences utterly failing them. Their houses filled with oppression shall also be laid in the dust; their winter and summer-houses, many of them curiously adorned with ivory, and the structure superb and magnificent, shall be plundered and demolished by the invading foe. *Note*; (1.) Great houses afford no protection against God's judgments; rather, when built by unrighteousness, maintained by oppression, or abused by pride and luxury, they provoke them more speedily and fearfully. (2.) They who make any creature their idol, will sooner or later be convinced of the folly and misery of their dependence thereon.

C H A P. IV.

Ver. 1. Ye kine of Basban] See the note on Psal. xxii. 12. and Ezek. xxxix. 18. After having testified in the preceding chapter against the sumptuous palaces, the luxury and extravagance of Samaria, the prophet here attacks the covetousness, softness, and violence of the powerful women of this city; who abused their authority over their husbands, and employed their credit and power, like other Jezebels, to oppress the poor, and to perform all acts of cruelty and injustice. These women are represented in the next verse under the metaphor of fishes, wantoning in the streams, as they did in the midst of lascivious delights; but soon to be drawn out, and thrown aside.

Ver. 3. And ye shall go out, &c.] *And ye shall go out at the breaches, every cow after the other, and shall betake yourselves to the mountains of Moza, saith the Lord.* But Houbigant supposes the metaphor in the preceding verses to be kept up; and he translates it, *And ye shall come out by the apertures which are nearest to you, and ye shall be cast into nets, or receptacles.* He conceives the meaning of the metaphor to be, that these fishes, being caught with hooks and nets, should be taken out thence and cast into a kind of well, a receptacle, for future use.

Ver. 4. Come to Beth-el] This and the following verses are spoken ironically. See Hosea, iv. 15. xii. 11. "Signalize your zeal and your diligence in those things which the Lord abhorreth most." Instead of, *after three years*, Houbigant reads with the Vulgate, *in three days*; which

* See the notes for another interpretation of this passage.

all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

7 And also I have withholden the rain from you, when *there were* yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered.

8 So two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

9 I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig-trees and your olive-trees increased, the palmer-worm devoured *them*: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

10 I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men

have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

11 I have overthrown *some* of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.

12 Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.

13 For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The LORD, The God of Hosts, is his name.

perhaps were those prescribed for the payment of their tithes.

Ver. 6. And I also have given] For this cause have I given, &c. "The famine which I have sent upon the cities and territories of Israel, has not brought you to a sense of your sins, or any sincere purposes of amendment." The famine alluded to is recorded 2 Kings, viii. 1. See Calmet.

Ver. 7, 8. And also I have withholden the rain] These verses apparently refer to the withholding of those rains which filled their reservoirs of water for drinking; and our translators should have used the term dried up, as they did in translating the same word, Job, xiv. 11. instead of withered. It is not to be supposed that their wheat harvest was delayed to the close of July. At present at Aleppo, barley harvest commences about the beginning of May, and the wheat harvest, as well as that, is generally over by the 20th. In Barbary it comes on at the latter end of May, or the beginning of June, according to the quality of the preceding seasons. Agreeably to this, Raimond de Agiles gives us to understand, that a great part of their harvest at Ramula was gathered in before the sixth of June in 1099, where he and the Christian army, having passed through Ramula in their way to Jerusalem, found most of the harvest ended.

Ver. 11. Ye were as a fire-brand, &c.] A proverbial expression, used both by sacred and profane writers to signify a narrow escape out of imminent danger. The comparison expresses perfectly well the state to which the Syrians reduced the Israelites in the war here referred to. "They shall see one part of their kingdom seized upon by the Syrians, their cities taken, their fields plundered, their troops defeated. That which shall be saved, shall escape with difficulty, and as it were half burned: a fire-brand

"plucked out of the burning." See Isai. vii. 4. Zech. iii. 2. 1 Cor. iii. 15. and Calmet.

Ver. 12. Therefore thus will I do unto thee, &c.] But now what shall I do unto thee, O Israel, after I have done these things? Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel! Ver. 13. For lo, he is at hand, who formeth, &c. Houbigant. "Thy God himself will come to take full vengeance upon thee." Others paraphrase it, "Prepare yourselves to stand before the Messiah: for he shall come to exercise against you my whole vengeance, and to execute all my threatenings." And they suppose it to refer to the last destruction of Jerusalem.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, God's controversy against the oppressors and idolaters is here continued.

1. The oppressors are convicted, and their punishment read. Like kine of Bashan, they were strong, wanton, unruly, breaking down the fence of justice, and treading the weak under their feet; they fattened on the mountains of Samaria, oppressing the poor, and crushing the needy, by an enormous load of taxes, or the perversion of justice; or with a hard hand extorting such rents from their indigent tenants, as left them scarcely a sufficiency to live; which say to their masters, Bring and let us drink; which may be the words of the magistrates encouraging the masters of the poor to find some accusation against them, and for an entertainment they would decide the cause in their favour; or of one oppressive lord to another, willing to feast with him on the spoils of oppression. But God will not suffer such deeds to pass with impunity; He hath sworn by his holiness, and irrevocable is the decree; they shall be taken and destroyed, as easily and irresistibly as the fish which is caught by the hook; and they and their posterity, who should survive the slaughter made by the Assyrians, shall be

fold

CHAP. V.

A lamentation for Israel. An exhortation to repentance. God rejecteth their hypocritical service.

[Before Christ 787.]

HEAR ye this word which I take up against you, *even* a lamentation, O house of Israel.

sold for captives, and carried, as fish out of their element, into a strange land. Their city walls being beaten down by a besieging army, some would attempt to escape at the breaches, whilst others *cast themselves into the palace or citadel*, or lodged their substance there, but in vain; the fugitives will be pursued, and the high fortrefs laid low, even to the dust. *Note*: (1.) God will one day appear the patron of the injured, and avenge their wrongs. (2.) The fruits of oppression are often made the food of intemperance, and thus doubly aggravate the sinner's guilt. (3.) What is got by wickedness often perishes strangely, and every observer may see the finger of God in the visitation.

2. The idolaters are abandoned to their own devices, and a heavier curse cannot be laid upon them. Ironically speaking, God bids them to go on to *multiply their transgressions* at Beth-el and Gilgal, to bring their daily sacrifices, and offer their tithes at their idol-temples and altars, instead of the sanctuary at Jerusalem: and, calling on them ironically to mimic the worship of his temple, Lev. vii. 13. he says, *Offer your sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven to your idols*; and out of ostentation of piety, or inviting others to the feast, *proclaim and publish the free offerings; for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel*. They took a pleasure and pride in these idolatrous services: justly therefore doth God give them up to their own inventions, to fill up the measure of their iniquities.

2dly, The incorrigibleness of this people left them wholly inexcusable in their sins. God had tried repeatedly by his visitations to bend their stubborn hearts, ready to receive them if they humbled their souls; waiting with long patience, and loth to abandon them to ruin; but neither mercies nor judgments had any effect: five times he complains, *yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord*. We have,

1. An account of the methods that God had taken, by lesser judgments, to bring them to repentance.

[1.] He had visited them with famine in all their cities, 2 Kings, viii. 1. *I have given you cleanness of teeth*, there being no provision left, not even bread to chew, and satisfy the cravings of hunger: yet this was ineffectual; they repented not.

[2.] He sent a drought upon the land, and withheld the rain *when there were yet three months to the harvest*, the time when it usually fell; and without it the corn was scorched up and withered away; but, that they might observe that this was not a thing merely *accidental*, or owing to any influence of secondary causes, but by divine direction, as a judgment upon them, *he caused it to rain on one city, and not on another*, and gave the clouds their commission to *water one piece, or inheritance*, while the estate which lay

2 The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is forsaken upon her land; *there is none to raise her up*.

3 For thus saith the Lord GOD; The city that went out *by* a thousand shall leave an hundred, and that which went forth *by* an hundred shall leave ten, to the house of Israel.

contiguous, was scorched up with heat and drought: and probably this distinction was observable, the idolaters being punished, and the few faithful miraculously spared. In this distress, *two or three cities wandered into one city to drink water*, but they were not satisfied, there being none, or but little to spare from their own wants; and even this produced no change.

[3.] Blasting and mildew next destroyed their corn and wine, and the palmer-worm devoured all their trees and herbage; yet they persisted in impenitence, and turned not to him that smote them.

[4.] The pestilence succeeded. They fell by a sudden stroke, like the first-born of Egypt, and God slew their armies with the sword of an enemy; or *in the way of Egypt*, as they went thither for food, some fell by the pestilence; and others, who went in companies, were intercepted and slain by their enemies, and their corpses left unburied, filling the air with noisome effluvia: yet, notwithstanding, the survivors repented not.

[5.] By fire from heaven God overthrew some of them, like Sodom and Gomorrah, as monuments of vengeance, and a warning to the rest who were spared, as brands *plucked out of the burning*; yet all their judgments left them as they found them, hardened in sin.

2. Since all has proved hitherto ineffectual, God will nevertheless send them the divinely appointed Messiah, and make to them his last great offer of salvation from guilt and corruption. *Therefore thus will I do unto thee, or nevertheless*, notwithstanding all these provocations, I will do as I have promised, sending the divine Messiah, who shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob, from every soul that embraces him in faith: *and because I will do this unto thee*, let such an act of astonishing mercy and grace at last bend thy stubborn neck; and *prepare to meet thy God, O Israel*; to receive him with readiness, submission, and delight, who comes with tidings of salvation. *For so, he that formeth the mountains*, the great Creator of all, and who can make every mountain of difficulty a plain before the believer; *and createth the wind*, holding these turbulent servants under his command; *and declareth unto man what is his thought*, being the searcher of hearts, and revealing unto men, by his prophets, his own purposes concerning them, which are *thoughts of peace, and not of evil*; *that maketh the morning darkness*, changing prosperity into adversity, or the *darkness's morning*, causing Christ, the day-star, to arise; *and treadeth upon the high places of the earth*, exalted above all, and treading down the proudest of his foes; *the Lord, Jehovah; the God of Hosts is his name*, to whom all must bow, in the way of mercy or judgment, and humble their souls at his feet.

4 ¶ For thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live :

5 But seek not Beth-el, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beer-sheba : for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Beth-el shall come to nought.

6 Seek the LORD, and ye shall live ; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Beth-el.

7 Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth,

8 Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night : that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth : The LORD is his name :

9 That strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortrefs.

10 They hate him that rebuketh in the

gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.

11 Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat : ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them ; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them.

12 For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins : they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right.

13 Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time ; for it is an evil time.

14 Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live : and so the LORD, the God of Hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken.

15 Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate : it may be that the LORD God of Hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

16 Therefore the LORD, the God of Hosts,

The words are generally understood in a quite different sense, as a threatening of more terrible judgment, since the former visitations were ineffectual. They must now prepare to meet an offended God, coming forth to execute vengeance ; and how would they be able to stand when he appeared, whose power was irresistible as his wrath was intolerable. It is our wisdom to prepare to meet God as our God, by faith, penitence, and prayer, before we are summoned to appear at his bar in an hour of death, or at the day of judgment.

CHAP. V.

Ver. 1. *Even a lamentation*] This and the following chapter contain a kind of mournful song upon the misfortunes of Israel. See Jer. ix. 17. and the introduction to the book of Lamentations.

Ver. 2. *Forfaken, &c.*] *Cast down, or laid prostrate, &c.* The kingdom of Israel, or of the ten tribes, after being carried into captivity, was never more re-established : it never formed a distinct kingdom from that of Judah.

Ver. 3. *The city that went out by a thousand*] “ The city which was able to furnish out a thousand men for war, shall have only a hundred of them left. Only one in ten of them shall escape the sword, and other chances of war.” This was the exhausted state of Israel, when Salmanser attacked and took Samaria, and carried them into captivity.

Ver. 5. *And pass not to Beer-sheba*] Beer-sheba was not in the kingdom of Israel ; and therefore we may hence collect that it was usual for the Israelites to pass into the kingdom of Judah, to Beer-sheba, and there to use some vain and idolatrous services. This place was remarkable

for being the dwelling of Abraham, who planted a grove there for the worship of God ; which probably continued, and was abused to the purposes of idolatry. It is immediately after said, that Gilgal and Beth-el shall perish ; but not Beer-sheba ; because Amos prophesies against the kingdom of Israel, not of Judah, as is plain from the following verse, where he calls them the *house of Joseph*, or the kingdom of the ten tribes, whereof Ephraim and Manasse, the sons of Joseph, were the principal.

Ver. 7. *To wormwood, &c.*] *Into wormwood, and cast down righteousness to the earth.*

Ver. 9. *That strengtheneth the spoiled*] *Who darteth out destruction upon the mighty, and bringeth devastation upon the fortrefs.* Schultens. We need not be surpris'd to find Amos, who was only a herdsman, speak here of the stars as an astronomer, ver. 8. In Arabia, and in the neighbouring countries, to this present day, not only the shepherds, but the men in general, the women and children, know the names of the stars. Sanctius assures us, that the shepherds in Spain know perfectly well the stars of Ursa Major, Orion, the Pleiades, &c. and that they generally measure the time of night by the courses of these stars.

Ver. 11. *Burdens of wheat*] Houbigant's reading is, *A pledge, or interest for wheat* : “ You exact a large and exorbitant interest or price for the necessaries of life.”

Ver. 12. *They afflict the just, &c.*] *Who afflict the just, who take a bribe, and who turn aside, &c.* Houbigant.

Ver. 13. *Therefore the prudent shall keep silence, &c.*] “ The prophet who finds that he shall not be heard, and that his remonstrances will not be regarded, shall retire, and keep silence till the Lord commands him to speak.” This was the conduct of Amos himself. See chap. vii. 12, 16.

The

the Lord, saith thus; Wailing *shall be* in all streets; and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing.

17 And in all vineyards *shall be* wailing: for I will pass through thee, saith the LORD:

18 Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end *is* it for you? the day of the LORD *is* darkness, and not light.

19 As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.

20 *Shall* not the day of the LORD *be* dark-

ness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?

21 ¶ I hate, I despise your feast-days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.

22 Though ye offer me burnt-offerings and your meat-offerings, I will not accept *them*: neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts.

23 Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.

24 But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

25 Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?

The wise man advises us not to speak before those who will not hear and regard, Ecclus. xxxii. 9. and our Saviour in the Gospel exhorts, not to cast pearl before swine. See Calmet.

Ver. 14. *As ye have spoken] As ye have desired.* Houbigant.

Ver. 16. *Therefore the Lord, &c.] Certainly the Lord of Hosts hath said, &c.* Houbigant. The latter part of the verse may be read, *And the husbandman shall call the pro-fessed mourners to lamentation and wailing.*

Ver. 17. *For I will pass through thee]* "About to avenge mine own injuries; not, as before, sending the pestilence and famine." To the same purpose it is said in the 12th verse of the former chapter, *Prepare to meet thy God.*

Ver. 18. *Woe unto you, &c.] Woe unto them that wish for the day of the Lord. And why? To you the day of the Lord will be, &c.* Infidels made a mock at the words of the prophets, when they told them the day of the Lord was at hand; and from a principle of unbelief expressed a desire of seeing this day, that they might be convinced of the truth of such predictions by ocular demonstrations. Amos goes on in very strong terms to inform them that this day would be in no respect desirable to them, as it would be attended with extreme terrors and evils.

Ver. 21. *Feast-days] Sacrifices.*

Ver. 25—27. *Have ye offered unto me, &c.]* See the note on Deut. xii. 8. Jer. vii. 22. These verses have made some people think that the Israelites, in their forty years' wanderings through the wilderness, continued in a course of rebellion against God, nay, and in the practice of idolatry: but this is a thing highly improbable in itself, whether we respect Moses their leader, or God their supreme Governor, and the miraculous providences whereby they were all along fed and sustained in that wilderness; so neither do the words of the prophet carry with them any such import. The idolatry here mentioned is much more likely to have been the sin of the Israelites, who lived in Amos's days, than of their forefathers, who perished in the wilderness. For why should the prophet denounce this punishment of captivity upon them for the sins of their ancestors, at such

a distance? and for a species of idolatry, too, of which there is not the least mention in the history?—Why not rather for their own sins? All that is here mentioned, relating to the Israelites in the wilderness, is the omission of sacrifices. Nor is this mentioned by way of reproach; for how should he reproach them for the omission of a thing, which, perhaps, was not in their power constantly to perform? Had the Israelites in the wilderness had plenty of sheep, and bullocks, and corn, so as to offer the accustomed sacrifices, there had been no need to feed them all that time by miracle. But if they had none, or not sufficient, they could not offer them; nor did God require it of them. And the design for which the prophet mentions this particular here, was evidently (as appears from the context) to let the people of his own time see how little God valued their sacrifices in reality, as to the mere worth of the thing; and how much he despised them, when offered to him by wicked hands, and with a vain persuasion that they would be accepted, instead of those other more substantial duties which they were bound to practise. Ver. 21—25. *I hate, &c.* that is to say, "These things are much more acceptable to me, than the richest sacrifices that you can bring: for you know that I was not strict in exacting such things from your forefathers when they were in the wilderness, which was for the space of forty years. Why then should you think that I would accept them now, instead of that justice and judgment which you ought rather to have practised."—"But, to make your sacrifices still more unacceptable to me, (as it goes on, ver. 26, 27.) you have added your idolatrous practices to my worship. You have carried about in procession the tabernacles of *Moloch, &c.*" That is, "As you have carried about your idols in great pomp, so shall you yourselves be carried in triumph to a distant country, saith the Lord, the God of Hosts, the Creator and absolute Disposer of all the *hosts of heaven*, both visible and invisible; which you, in opposition to his declared will, so foolishly and presumptuously worship." See Peters on Job, p. 312.

Ver.

26 But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves.

27 Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name is The God of Hosts.

Ver. 26. And Chiun your images.] And the image of your idols. Houbigant; who understands the word *כִּיּוּן* *chiun* to be an appellative, and not a proper name in this place. The LXX for *Chiun* read *Ραιφαν*, *Raiphan*, and St. Stephen, *Αἰς*, vii. 43. *Ρεμφαν*, *Remphan*, or, as some copies read, *Ραφαν*, or *Ρεφαν*. Parkhurst is of opinion, that *Chiun* and *Remphan* are two words very properly expressive of one and the same god. Learned men have generally supposed that the Arabian or Canaanitish *כִּיּוּן* *chiun*, answers to the Greek *Chronos*, and the Roman *Saturn*: an opinion not a little confirmed by the attributes given to *Chronos*, in the Orphic hymn addressed to that idol. He is there called the *ever-blooming father of gods and men*. He is said to *subdue or consume all things, and again to renew them*. The attributes of *universal parent of the world,—fructifier* [*βλαστρουα*] *of earth and heaven*, and several other remarkable epithets are assigned to him. We meet with an idol of the same kind, and almost of the same nature as *Chiun*, among the West-Indian philosophers: the Peruvians relate, “That a man of extraordinary shape, whose name was *Choun*, and whose body had neither bones nor muscles, came from the north into their country: that he levelled mountains, filled up valleys, and opened himself a passage through the most inaccessible places: and that this *Choun* created the first inhabitants of Peru, giving them herbs and wild fruits of the field for their sustenance.” They also relate, that “this first founder of Peru, having been injured by some savages who inhabited the plains, changed part of the ground which before had been very fruitful, into sand; forbad the rain to fall, and dried up the plants: but, being afterwards moved with compassion, he opened the springs, and suffered the rivers to flow.” This *Choun* was worshipped as a god, till such time as *Pachacamac* came from the South.” See *Religious Ceremonies*, &c. vol. iii. p. 199. and Parkhurst’s *Lexicon* on the word *כִּיּוּן*.

Ver. 27. Beyond Damascus.] The way into Assyria, whether the ten tribes were conveyed, was by Damascus. Amos does not expressly declare into what place the Israelites were to be removed; he only foretels that their banishment should be far remote; not at Damascus; whether they were carried by the kings of Syria, by whom they had before often been conquered and led captive. See Houbigant.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The prophet cannot but be himself affected with the miseries that he foresees coming upon the people: while, therefore, he demands of them attention to the doleful tidings, he laments in elegiac strains of woe the virgin of Israel fallen, as if she was already a dead corpse, since God had pronounced her doom.

1. Her ruin is irrecoverable. She is not only *fallen*, but *fallen to rise no more*, having never been a kingdom since the ten tribes were carried captive by Salmaneser. *She is forsaken upon her land*, both of God, her allies, and her own people; *there is none to raise her up*, either able or

willing to help her; for those impenitent sinners whom God is determined to destroy, none can save.

2. The inhabitants shall be diminished, and brought very low. Before the final vengeance overtook them, a variety of calamities had reduced their numbers; so that the city which could formerly muster a thousand men, could on that invasion raise but a hundred; and the village which had a hundred inhabitants was reduced to ten: or these numbers only remained after the campaign, but one in ten escaping the ravages of war.

2dly, The blessings of obedience, and the miseries of sin, are topics upon which we should often dwell, that we may choose the one and avoid the other.

1. The sins of Israel are brought to their remembrance, that they might repent, and amend the evil of their ways. In general, God charges them with *manifest transgressions and mighty sins*; he knew them, however secretly committed, and now produces them for their conviction. *Note*; The sinner who is brought to a true knowledge of his state, stands amazed at the *multitude* of his transgressions, by thought, word, and deed committed against the divine Majesty; and is shocked at the *flagrant enormities* which cry for vengeance against him.

[1.] They were *idolaters* flying to Beth-el and Gilgal, where their idols were, instead of having recourse to God at his temple.

[2.] They practised the most *flagrant injustice*; *ye turn judgment to wormwood*, acting in direct opposition thereto, and *leave off righteousness in the earth*, having not the least regard for it, but trampling it under foot.

[3.] They were *oppressors* of the poor, not only plundering them of *burdens of wheat*, their very gleanings, or the fruit gotten by hard labour; but also *trud them under foot*. Imperious, insolent, and cruel to them, they *afflicted the just*, perhaps hated them because they were so, and took every opportunity to harass and torment them. *They take a bribe*, and *they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right*; be the right of the cause never so clear, the bribe carries it against law and equity; and they who cannot bribe them, need not expect redress of the most flagrant injuries.

(4.) They were *malicious persecutors* of God’s faithful ministers and people. *They hate him that rebuketh in the gate*, the ministers and prophets, who openly preached against their iniquities; and *they abhor him that speaketh uprightly*; the conversation, yea, the very person of such is their abhorrence, as they are a constant and living reproof to their iniquities. And in those evil days, when the enmity of the wicked is so avowed, *the prudent shall keep silence in that time*. When a man will be made an offender for a word, it is as dangerous to complain, as fruitless to reprove. *Note*; Good men are often driven to unwilling silence, though it is a pain and grief to them.

2. Their punishment is foretold, except they repent. The head-quarters of their idolatry, Beth-el and Gilgal, shall come to nought, and the inhabitants go into captivity.

A fire

C H A P. VI.

The wantonness of Israel, and their incorrigibleness, shall be plagued with desolation.

[Before Christ 787.]

WO E to them *that are* at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria,

which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!

2 Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines: *be they* better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border?

A fire shall devour the house of Joseph; it shall consume the whole nation, and *none* of their idols at *Beth-el* shall be able to *quench* it; so little protection can any creature afford us in the day of wrath. Though by the fruits of oppression they reared magnificent abodes for themselves, they shall not be suffered to dwell in them, nor eat the fruits of the pleasant vineyards which they had planted, by death cut off, or by captivity removed far away. *Note*; What is not honestly got, is not likely to be long enjoyed.

3. To prevent this threatened vengeance, they are exhorted speedily to seek the Lord for pardon and grace, in order that their hearts and lives may be reformed and changed. *Seek ye me, saith the Lord, my mercy and favour, and return to my worship and service, and ye shall live; notwithstanding all that is past, their guilt shall be forgiven, and their forfeited lives restored; they shall be suffered still to dwell in their own land; and, what is far better, as partakers of God's grace, and, perseveringly cleaving to him through faith, shall live spiritually his people on earth, and eternally with him in heaven. But they must renounce their idolatries at Beth-el and Gilgal; for while these remained, no mercy could be hoped for: and what wretched vanities were these, compared with him whom they were exhorted to seek, and to whose favour they were invited; he maketh the seven stars, called the Pleiades, and Orion, another constellation, with all the heavenly hosts, and turneth the stream of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night, directing the constant revolutions of day and night; or able to turn the deepest night of distress into the day of exultation and joy; or the meridian brightness of prosperity into the darkness of most abject wretchedness; that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth, as in the deluge, to punish an ungodly world; or, by exhalations from the great abyss of waters, replenishes the clouds, which drop down the rain to water the earth; the Lord is his name, Jehovah, the self-sufficient, all-sufficient God: that strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, enabling them to stand against their oppressors; yea, though vanquished before, raising them above their conquerors, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress, besiege and take it. However desperate, therefore, their national affairs might appear, if God became their friend, they might be easily retrieved: if then they would be delivered from danger, they must return to God, and the paths of duty. Seek good and not evil, putting away all your abominations, and desiring henceforward to know God's holy will, and walk in all his holy ways; that ye may live, as God hath promised; and so the Lord God of Hosts shall be with you, as ye have spoken, as once they boasted he was, or as now they prayed he might be; and his gracious presence is better than life itself. Hate the evil, not*

only because it is so fatal to your souls, but because it is so offensive and odious to the holy God; and love the good; God himself, his people, his ways, his worship, delighting in the Lord, and in every good word and work which may advance his glory: and, particularly, what they had hitherto so neglected, *establish judgment in the gate*, that justice may be administered to all impartially, freely, speedily; it may be that the Lord God of Hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph; though reduced to a few, this conduct would be the means of restoring their prosperity; at least the remnant of the truly faithful souls should find favour and grace in the eyes of the Lord. *Note*; The way of duty is the path of safety, and God hath never yet failed those who seek him.

3dly, The clause from ver. 16. to the conclusion of the chapter, declares what would be the case, if neither judgments, mercies, nor exhortations wrought upon them.

1. Such calamities were coming upon them, as would raise a bitter and universal mourning. Their streets should echo with wailing, and their highways resound with lamentations; even the husbandman and the vine-dresser shall leave their employments, to join the general cry, Alas! alas! while those, whose profession it had been to awaken the sorrows of others, shall now with no fictitious notes of woe pour forth their anguish, and raise the melancholy sound; for I will pass through thee, saith the Lord, with such fearful vengeance and desolations, as when of old the destroying angel passed through the land of Egypt.

2. The scoffers are particularly and severely rebuked. Many of the profane and ungodly mocked at the warnings given, and with daring insolence and hardened infidelity bid the day come, as if they neither believed nor feared it. Therefore *woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord*; it would come faster than they were aware; to what end is it for you? it would make them wish a thousand times that their impious speeches were unsaid; for the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light: a terrible day for them. And it is repeated, to affect them with a sense of their danger, even very dark, and no brightness in it, when the hopes with which these sinners, and all who are like them, flattered themselves, shall be lost in black unfathomable despair. No door of escape shall then be open; it shall be as if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him, such a multitude of dire calamities should surround them; or went into a house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him; for no place in a day of wrath can afford the impatient sinner shelter or support. Perhaps some wished for these troublesome times which were threatened, hoping to make their own advantage of them; but, to their cost, they would find themselves dreadfully involved in the common calamity.

4thly.

3 Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near;

4 That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall;

5 That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David;

6 That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: But they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

4thly, Amidst abounding ungodliness, they flattered themselves that the form of godliness which they observed would preserve them from ruin; but they are woefully mistaken.

1. Their sacrifices and services, so far from being pleasing to God, were his abomination; and their sacred songs grated harsh discord in his ears. Not only they were performed contrary to his institution, at Beth-el instead of Jerusalem; but also their allowed iniquity and barefaced hypocrisy made them doubly displeasing and loathsome in his sight. *Note;* (1.) Formality and hypocrisy are more odious to God than open profaneness; these shall receive greater damnation. (2.) Many flatter themselves that their duties and devotions will carry them to heaven, when their pride, and vain confidence in these things, only the more certainly lead them down to hell.

2. What God required of them was righteousness and judgment, without which no sacrifice could avail. *Let judgment run down as waters*, freely, copiously, without interruption; *and righteousness as a mighty stream*, bearing down before it ungodliness and wrong.

3. To idols, not to God, had their sacrifices been offered. *Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years?* No. The greatest part of the time none were offered; and, of the few sacrifices which they did bring, the golden calf had a chief share: so soon idolatry began, and had continued ever since among them. *Ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch*, little shrines or small images of this hated idol, probably the sun, in honour of whom they burnt their children in the fire; *and Chiun*, the same as *Remphan*, Acts, vii. 43. representing also *Moloch*, or perhaps the planet Saturn; *your images; the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves*; the worship of the heavenly host being the most ancient idolatry, which they had adopted, worshipping and serving the creature instead of the Creator.

4. For these things they are doomed to an ignominious captivity. *Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus*, into a more distant and strange land, even *beyond Babylon*, as Stephen quotes it, Acts vii. 43. and the infallible certainty of the prediction is confirmed by *thus saith the Lord, whose name is the God of Hosts*, almighty to execute, and true to accomplish, the threatenings of his word.

CHAP. VI.

Ver. 1. Woe to them that are at ease] Houbigant reads very properly, *Woe to them that despise Zion*; for there was a perpetual rivalry between Zion and Samaria; and it is plain from the whole series, not only of this verse, but of the whole chapter, that the prophet addresses the men of Israel, and not of Judah.

Ver. 2. Be they better than these kingdoms? Are these kingdoms better than yours? Houbigant.

Ver. 4. That lie upon beds of ivory] This and the following verses give us an idea of a rich and flourishing state, abounding in luxury, and enjoying all the pleasures and delights of a long peace; which was the situation of the kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam the second. Instead of *lambs*, we may read *choice lambs*.

Ver. 6. That drink wine in bowls] See the note on Ps. lxxv. 8. Prov. xxiii. 31. Cant. viii. 2. Upon a review of which it may be doubted, whether the *drinking wine in bowls* above spoken of is to be understood of the quantity drunk, or of the magnificence of the vessels made use of. The other particulars seem rather to refer to the magnificence of their repasts, than the quantity consumed; and St. Jerome, on Prov. xxi. 17., speaks of a *shell*, the porcelain of those ancient times, as a piece of *luxury in drinking*; which he calls *sorbitiuncula delicata*, and *contrita olera*, opposing this implement to a *cup*. May not then the prophet's complaint be similar to that of this father of the Christian church, and relate rather to the *magnificence of the drinking vessel*, than to the quantity which they drank? Erasmus, in his notes on St. Jerome, tells us, that Virgil speaks of the like piece of grandeur:

Ut conchâ libat, et sarrano indormiat ostro:

To drink in bowls which glitt'ring gems encase,
To loll on couches, &c.

DRYDEN.

Though the common reading is *gemma*, a *gem*, instead of *conchâ*, a *shell*. "I have seen," says the author of the *Observations*, "very beautiful and highly valued vessels, made of shells; and the Red Sea, which is celebrated for producing some of the finest sea-shells in the world, being near Judæa, gave an opportunity to the ancient Jews of introducing vessels of this kind among their other precious utensils. Nor are they now esteemed only by our European virtuosi; the people of the East also value them. Thus shells were sent along with fruit, for a present to Dr. Pocock, when at Tor, near mount Sinai." See *Observations*, p. 194.

But they are not grieved, &c.] "They are not touched with compassion for the evils and misfortunes of their brethren. They can behold without concern the sufferings wherewith the poor are burthened. They themselves, rioting in the midst of luxury, feel none of those pressures which lie so heavy on the necks of the indigent and mean." The prophet alludes to the sufferings of Joseph, which his brethren not only occasioned, but disregarded. See Calmet.

Ver. 7. And the banquet, &c.] *And the mirth, &c.*
But

7 ¶ Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed.

8 The Lord GOD hath sworn by himself, faith the LORD the God of Hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.

9 And it shall come to pass, if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die.

10 And a man's uncle shall take him up, and he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that is by the sides of the house, *Is there yet any with thee?* and he shall say, No. Then shall he say, Hold thy tongue: for we

may not make mention of the name of the LORD.

11 For, behold, the LORD commandeth, and he will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts.

12 ¶ Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plow *there* with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock:

13 Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?

14 But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, faith the LORD the God of Hosts; and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hemath unto the river of the wilderness.

But Houbigant reads it, *And the noise of the luxurious shall be taken away.*

Ver. 10. *And a man's uncle, &c.] And a man's near kinsman—or he that burns him.* The prophet describes here a pestilence which was to ravage Israel. "If there remain ten men in a house, they shall die one after another, and perform, as far as possible, the last duties to each other successively; and as they die they shall be burned in the house without any other ceremony, and their bones shall be borne to the grave of their forefathers." In those times, as appears from several places of Scripture, the dead bodies of the Hebrews were burned. But after the captivity, the custom of interring, and sometimes of embalming, was resumed again. See Calmet. Houbigant renders the last clause, *For it availeth not to call upon the name of the Lord;* as he is determined upon a total desolation of great and small; ver. 11. where the expression is proverbial; though some understand by the *great house*, the kingdom of Israel; and by the *little one*, that of Judah. But the whole prophesy evidently respects the kingdom of Samaria only.

The latter part of ver. 11. may be read, *He will smite the great house with ruins, and the smaller house with breaches.*

Ver. 12. *Shall horses run, &c.] Shall horses run upon the sharp rock, or shall it be plowed with oxen? Because ye have turned, &c.* As much as to say, "You pervert the use of things: for judgments are appointed to support and comfort the oppressed, and you use them in order to oppress; as if any one should abuse oxen for the ploughing of a barren rock." See Houbigant.

Ver. 13. *Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought]* That is, in idols. *Have we not taken to us horns? &c.* That is to say, "Rendered ourselves strong and powerful? Elevated ourselves in glory and authority?"

Ver. 14. *I will raise up against you a nation, &c.]* By this nation, is meant the Assyrians. The kingdom of Judah is

plainly understood in this verse, because in the time of Amos its extent was as here described. See ver. 2.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, When sinners are most secure, and at ease, then will the terrible woes of God suddenly surprise them. We have here,

1. A description of their pride, security, and sensuality.

[1.] They were puffed up with confidence in their wealth and fortresses, and imagined that they would be their defence from the judgments threatened. *They are at ease in Zion*, wallowing in affluence; and *trust in the mountain of Samaria*, the city by art and nature being strongly fortified; *which are named chief of the nations*, the principal persons of Judah and Israel, who dwelt in Zion and Samaria; *to whom the house of Israel came*, for judgment; or these cities were the capitals of the two nations, and thither the people resorted. Yet, illustrious and great as Zion and Samaria were, they need not look far to find other places as distinguished in the annals of fame, but now reduced to ruins; such as Calneh, Gen. x. 10. Hamath the great, and Gath, 2 Kings, xii. 17. chief cities of kingdoms greater than Israel and Judah, and their territories more extensive; and if they fell from their towering height of pride, let not Zion and Samaria be secure. *Note;* (1.) Greatness is too apt to beget pride. (2.) The falls of others should be our warning.

[2.] They promised themselves impunity in their iniquities—*ye that put far away the evil day*, keeping it out of their thoughts, lest it should damp their joys; or flattering themselves with long years of indulgence, unaffected with judgments which appeared so distant, or perhaps never would come; and *cause the seat of violence to come near*, acting with injustice and oppression, on the presumption of not being called to account for their transgressions. Thus the hope of impunity emboldens sinners to commit iniquity.

3 Z

[3.] They

C H A P. VII.

The judgments of the grasshoppers, and of the fire, are diverted by the prayer of Amos. By the wall made by a plumb-line is signified the rejection of Israel. Amaziab complaineth of Amos. Amos sheweth his calling, and Amaziab's judgment.

[Before Christ 787.]

THUS hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me; and, behold, he formed

[3.] They sunk into sensuality, and abused their abundance to minister to their indolence, luxury, and carnal delights. *They lie upon beds of ivory, &c.*; not that the conveniencies of life are in themselves evil, or, temperately used, forbidden; the sin was, in being luxurious in their furniture, and placing their affections on these things, abusing them to intemperance, squandering their time and wealth which should be otherwise employed, and racking their inventions for new amusements; a conduct peculiarly criminal, when the miseries of the land called for mourning and humiliation; *but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph*; either for the breaches which the nation had sustained, or the greater evils that threatened; or they did not sympathise with those of their brethren who were in trouble, too intent upon their own pleasures to care about the pains of others. *Note*; (1.) They who live in a round of dissipation and amusements are as effectually alienated from God, as if they were sunk in grosser excesses. (2.) When pleasure is made the grand pursuit and happiness, every thought and object are shunned which would intrude serious reflection.

2. For these things God denounces a woe against them. *Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed*: they shall experience an awful change. The chief in sin shall be the first in suffering; their palaces shall be turned into houses of bondage, their indolence into hard servitude, their bowls of wine and fatted calves shall be exchanged for bread and water: from beds of ivory they shall be reduced to lie on the cold earth, and their music shall be lost in groans.

2dly, As the sins of Israel cried for vengeance, we find it bound upon them by the tremendous oath of God who cannot lie. And woe unto the sinner concerning whom he shall thus swear to pour forth upon him the fierceness of his indignation.

1. He declares his abhorrence of them, and his determined purpose to deliver them into the hands of their enemies. Their *excellency*, their cities, fortresses, and treasures, on which they prided themselves, and their *palaces* built by unrighteousness, are hateful, and under a curse, doomed to be the prey of an invading foe; when their capital, with all therein, should be besieged and taken. *Note*; They who are the objects of God's hatred are miserable indeed!

2. The pestilence or famine shall devour those whom the sword has spared. If ten men escape in one house, *they shall all die*, and a man's nearest relation shall be obliged to do the last offices to the dead corpse, the mortality being so universal. *And when he that burneth goes*

grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, *it was the latter growth after the king's mowings.*

2 And it came to pass, *that* when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord GOD, forgive, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for *he is small.*

round to bring out *the bones* of the dead, (to such skeletons were they probably reduced who died by famine,) and shall ask of the last survivor that is in the house, *Is there yet any with thee? he shall say, No.* Then he without shall reply, *Hold thy tongue, for we may not make mention of the name of the Lord.* Either this is the language of their impenitence, discouraging all humbling applications to God; or of their despair, as if their case was *hopeless*, and it was in vain to pray; or of their repentance, forbidding the survivor to murmur, since all their sufferings were no more than their sins had justly provoked.

3. Their houses shall be destroyed. *He will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts*; neither rich nor poor shall escape: since both are involved in guilt, he commands execution to pass on them alike; for he is no respecter of persons.

4. All methods which could be taken for their good would be utterly fruitless, as if one should attempt to plough and harrow a rock; so hardened and impenetrable were their hearts. The past labours of the prophets had been ineffectual, and their future ones promised no better success; *for they persisted in their wicked ways; ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock*; instead of rendering justice to the injured, they but aggravated their oppression by their unrighteous decisions, under the formalities of law—*ye which rejoice in a thing of nought*, in their idols, their wealth, their power, which, against God's judgments, would afford no more protection than a straw against the stroke of the battle-axe, *which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength? have we not obtained victory over our enemies by our own arm, and are we not able in self-sufficiency to stand our ground against every foe?* Such was the language of their proud hearts, and they dared utter these vain boastings to God's great dishonour. *Note*; (1.) Prosperity necessarily increases the pride of those who forget God. (2.) They who flatter themselves with the conceit of their own goodness, and the strength of their own resolutions, *rejoice in a thing of nought.*

5. Their whole land shall be subdued and destroyed. *The Lord the God of Hosts*, against whom they had behaved so exceeding proudly, he that hath the armies of heaven and earth at his command, will send a *nation* against them, the Assyrians, *to afflict them* with all the miseries of a destructive war, and at last to carry them captive into a strange land, *from the entering-in of Hamath unto the river of the wilderness*; from one end of Judah to the other, 2 Kings, xiv. 25. for when God begins, he can make an end; and he never wants instruments of vengeance to execute his righteous judgments.

CHAP.

3 The LORD repented for this: It shall not be, saith the LORD.

4 ¶ Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me: and, behold, the Lord GOD called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part.

5 Then said I, O Lord GOD, cease, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small.

6 The LORD repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord GOD.

7 ¶ Thus he shewed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall *made* by a plumb-line, with a plumb-line in his hand.

8 And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, a plumb-line. Then said the LORD, Behold, I will set a plumb-line in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more:

9 And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be

laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.

10 ¶ Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words.

11 For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land.

12 Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there:

13 But prophesy not again any more at Beth-el: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court.

14 ¶ Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herd-man, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit:

CH A P. VII.

Ver. 1. He formed grasshoppers] Locusts. Houbigant. See the notes on Joel, i. and ii. and the introductory note to this prophet.

Ver. 2. By whom shall Jacob arise?] After the death of Jeroboam the second, the kingdom of Israel, formerly so flourishing and powerful, fell into a state of weakness, which induced it to have recourse to strangers to support it, being unable of itself. Menahem had recourse to Pul king of Assyria, whence arose the last misery of the state.

Ver. 3. The Lord repented for this] The Lord changed his purpose concerning this matter. Houbigant. See ver. 6.

Ver. 4. The Lord God called to contend by fire] In many places of Scripture war is denoted by fire. We observed, that after the death of Jeroboam the kingdom of Israel was laid waste by civil, and perhaps by foreign wars; for we are not well acquainted with the history of that time. The fire here spoken of was to have dried up the sea, and consumed a great part of the earth, figuratively speaking, had it not been for the prophet, who interposes, and arrests the effect, ver. 5, 6. The wars here mentioned were to destroy every thing so far as they were kindled and spread; but the Lord set bounds to his anger. Houbigant reads, *The Lord God called the fire to avenge his cause.*

Ver. 7. Upon a wall made by a plumb-line] Literally, Upon a wall of a plumb-line; or, erected by a plumb-line, in order to be perpendicular and firm. God is exhibited in this vision, as erecting, or as repairing Israel, like a wall, that it might not fall into ruin. For the kingdom of Israel had stood hitherto by the providence of God alone, though given to idolatry; and had been repaired under the reign of Jeroboam the second. Afterwards, in the next verse,

the Lord denounces that he would let down, or give up the plumb-line in Israel; for so it should be translated; that is, that the kingdom of Israel should be given up by him to their own counsels and strength; and that he would no more pass by among them, to repair and re-establish them. See Houbigant.

Ver. 9. The high-places of Isaac] That is, of Beer-sheba, where Isaac dwelt and built an altar to the Lord. See Gen. xxvi. 25.

Ver. 11. Jeroboam shall die by the sword] We do not read above that Amos said this; and as the sacred histories do not inform us that Jeroboam died by the sword, it is most likely this was a falsehood raised by Amaziah to injure Amos.

Ver. 13. For it is the king's chapel, &c.] Because this is the sanctuary of the king, and this is his palace] Samaria was the place where the kings of Israel commonly dwelt; but they had a palace at Beth-el, as this was the place where they exercised their false religion.

*Ver. 14. I was no prophet, &c.] Houbigant reads this, I am no prophet, neither am I a prophet's son; that is, "I am not accustomed to act as a prophet; this is not my condition of life, and therefore it is in vain that you bid me to go and prophesy in Judah; I have only this once taken upon me the person and office of a prophet, because such was God's immediate command to me." We may collect from this answer, that Amos did not prophesy at other periods of his life; but that what we now have of his prophecies were delivered almost all at the same time; for, if he had frequently been in this capacity, he would not have said, *I am not a prophet.* By *sycamore fruit*, is generally understood a kind of wild figs, which were common in Egypt and Palestine. See Zech. xiii. 5.*

15 And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.

16 ¶ Now therefore hear thou the word of the LORD: Thou sayest, Prophecy not against Israel, and drop not *thy word* against the house of Isaac.

17 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou shalt die in a polluted land: and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land.

Ver. 17. In a polluted land] By a *polluted land* is meant a heathen country far from the land of Israel; for the Hebrews considered every other country as polluted in comparison with theirs. History has not preserved to us enough of the life of Amaziah to give a minute account of the accomplishment of this prophecy in his person. It has been said, that Amos was put to death by him. See the introductory note.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The prophet before spoke what he heard from God in words; here he relates what was revealed to him in vision; and both confirming the same event, the ruin of a rebellious people. We have,

1. The judgment of grasshoppers or locusts, which are removed at the prophet's intercession. They were formed in the vision by God's hand, and commissioned to devour the after-grass, after the first mowings. Some understand this figuratively of the Assyrian army, which, under Pul their king, plundered the country, 2 Kings, xv. 19. after it had begun to revive a little under Jeroboam, 2 Kings, xiii. 25. from the ravages it had before suffered; see 2 Kings, xiii. 3. 22. Affected with the melancholy scene, the prophet becomes an earnest advocate for this miserable land: then I said, O Lord God, forgive, I beseech thee: sin was the cause of all their sufferings, and the removal of that was the great object of the prophet's prayer. Cease, I beseech thee, the unequal controversy, which must else quickly consume that sinful people, unable to stand before God's judgments: and he enforces his plea by their relation to him as the seed of Jacob; the low estate of misery to which they were already reduced; and the absolute despair into which they must fall, unless he was pleased graciously to pity, pardon, and save them. *By whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small.* The Lord heard and was intreated; he repented for this; removed this afflictive dispensation of his providence at the prophet's instance. *It shall not be, saith the Lord;* either the locusts, or the Assyrian army, shall not be permitted utterly to destroy the land; see 2 Kings, xv. 19, 20. *Note;* (1.) While we declare to sinners the judgments that they provoke, every pious prophet cannot but be an earnest advocate to avert them, so far as he from desiring the woeful day. (2.) Sin is the cause of every human misery; and the pardon of that is to be sought in the first place, in order to open the door for every other mercy. (3.) The low and afflicted state of the church at any time is a powerful argument to plead for present help. (4.) Powerfully effectual, and mightily availing, is the fervent prayer of a righteous man. Such advocates with God are the greatest blessings to their country.

2. Another judgment by fire succeeds, and this also is

extinguished at the prophet's prayer. *The Lord God called to contend by fire,* and, ready at his commands, the elements obey him: *it devoured the great deep;* it seemed to dry up the ocean; *and did cut up a part of the earth;* which may refer either to some remarkable visitation of lightning, consuming part of their country; or to the intense heat of the sun, occasioning a drought through the land, and consuming them by famine; or figuratively describes the devastations of the Assyrian army under Tiglath-Pileser, 2 Kings, xv. 29. and the captivity of a part of the land. Hereupon the prophet repeats his former request, and again succeeds in preventing their final ruin. *Note;* (1.) God hath many arrows in his quiver; and when one judgment does not humble a sinful soul, he will send another. (2.) God is not unwilling to multiply his pardons, if we are not weary in waiting upon him with our prayers.

3. In a third vision their final ruin is predicted; for reprieves are not pardons; and they whom neither mercies nor judgments effectually work upon, may expect to be at last utterly abandoned of God. *And he showed me, and behold the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumb-line:* the Jewish state was like a wall of adamant, strong, and raised by the divine architect straight and regular; and now he came, *with a plumb-line in his hand,* to discover their crookedness, who had so departed from the line of duty and his pure worship. On the proof, therefore, of their incorrigible perverseness, he now resolves to pass by them no more; and therefore the prophet may no more intercede for them. Their doom is fixed; their high places shall be destroyed; their idol-temples demolished; notwithstanding the holy progenitors from whom they descended, which they might flatter themselves would be their protection; and the house of Jeroboam, the great author of their apostacy from God, shall be cut off; as was shortly after accomplished by Shallum; 2 Kings, xv. 10. *Note;* (1.) No outward privileges will protect apostates from ruin. (2.) Walls of adamant are no defence against God's judgments. (3.) In all God's visitations he acts with strictest justice; so that they who suffer have not the shadow of complaint. (4.) Though God bears long with impenitent sinners, he will not bear always: vengeance, though slow, is sure.

2dly, From the kindness which the prophet had shewn by his intercession in behalf of the land, and the manifest design of all the judgments threatened, which was to lead them to repentance, one might have expected that the most grateful returns would have been made to their affectionate friend and faithful reprove; but let not the best of men be surpris'd at the basest ingratitude which they meet with.

CHAP. VIII.

By a basket of summer fruit is shewed the propinquity of Israel's end. Oppression is reproved. A famine of the word threatened.

[Before Christ 787.]

THUS hath the Lord God shewed unto me: and behold, a basket of summer fruit.

2 And he said, Amos, what seest thou?

1. Amaziah, the *priest* of Beth-el, or *prince*, the chief ruler perhaps both in ecclesiastical and civil affairs, could not bear the threatenings of the prophet, and therefore transmits to court an accusation against him as a traitor against the nation; as one that sowed sedition among the people, and spirited them up to murder the king: so that, if timely care was not taken, the land would not be able to bear all his words: either they would breed a revolt, or the country was so exasperated against him, that he would insinuate as if nothing could be a more popular act than to silence or punish him. *For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land; which was partly false and partly true.* Israel's ruin indeed the prophet foretold; but Amaziah suppresses the circumstances of Amos's intercession, and his declarations that their repentance would prevent the judgment. As for Jeroboam's death, the prophet said no such thing: the threatening was against his house, not himself; but this was easily perverted. *Note;* (1.) Apostate priests are the bitterest persecutors of the true prophets. (2.) It is a common method with designing men to represent the faithful as seditious; and troublers of the land, though in fact they are the best friends of it. (3.) They who bear testimony for God against men's sins, may expect to meet with the most malicious insinuations against them, and to have their words often tortured to a meaning of which they never dreamed.

2. Amaziah endeavours to drive Amos out of the country. What answer he received from court is not said; it should seem, not one so favourable as he expected; and therefore, to be rid of him at any rate, by pretending regard for his safety, which he insinuates would be in danger, he advises him to quit Beth-el, and fly to Judah, where he would be better received and rewarded; judging from his own case that Amos prophesied for bread, which at Beth-el he would never get: besides, the place was improper; it was *the king's chapel, and court*, where his plain speaking could not fail of being disagreeable, court-preaching requiring soft words, and smooth prophecies; nor could he think of making converts there, where the torrent ran so strong against him, and would the more endanger his safety the more he attempted to oppose it. *Note;* (1.) False and faithless prophets measure the faithful by themselves, and think their only motive to be that filthy lucre and worldly esteem which they adore. (2.) A zealous, active minister is a burthensome stone in the eyes of the lazy and negligent, especially when he happens to be in a very public situation, where his conduct more glaringly reflects on theirs; and there-

And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the LORD unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more.

3 And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord GOD: there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence.

4 ¶ Hear this, O ye that swallow up the

fore by fair means or foul they will strive to get rid of him.

3. Amos answers this wicked priest with the steadiness which becomes his office, and as one not to be intimidated by danger from the discharge of his duty. As for himself, he was not descended from a prophet, nor bred up in the schools of the prophets; but was an *herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore-fruit*, to serve his family or cattle; and from this employment the Lord called him to go and prophesy unto Israel. His divine mission, therefore, authorized him; he dared not desert his post, since he was sent thither of God; and, as he had been accustomed to hard fare, he was the better prepared to meet with any hardships in the course of his ministry; though they who dared oppose and oppress him should suffer for it; and Amaziah, who had forbid him to prophesy, among the first. *His wife will be an harlot*, and her wickedness will reflect infamy on him: his children shall fall by the sword of an enemy, and his eyes shall behold it; his estate shall be divided among the conquerors, and himself survive these miseries to die a wretched captive in a polluted land: *and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land*, as he would see fatally verified. *Note;* (1.) God often chooses weak and unlikely instruments; but whom he sends he will qualify for their office. (2.) Persecutors of God's prophets shall shortly meet their fearful doom. (3.) God's word will surely take place, whatever opposition sinners may make against it.

CHAP. VIII.

Ver. 1. A basket of summer fruit] Of autumnal fruit; or, "Of the last season of the year." Houbigant; and so in the next verse, where, instead of the end, he reads the last end, keeping up the allusion, and the expressive play of the words קבץ קטים, and קטים קבצים, in the original: whereby is signified, that as, after the autumnal fruits, no others are produced from the earth, or gathered from the tree; so it shall come to pass that the kingdom of Israel shall no more produce any fruit, nor re-flourish in the following years. After Jeroboam the second all things became worse and worse, till the kingdom of Israel was totally destroyed. See Jer. xxiv.

Ver. 3. And the songs of the temple] And the singers of the palace shall howl, &c. Houbigant. As Amos prophesies against Israel, not against Judah, the temple cannot be meant here. See ver. 8, 9. of the preceding chapter.

Ver. 4. O ye that swallow up the needy] Ye that tread down the poor, and oppress the meek of the land. Houbigant.

Ver.

needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail,

5 Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?

6 That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?

7 The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works.

8 Shall not the land tremble for this; and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood; and it shall be cast out and drowned, as *by* the flood of Egypt.

9 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day:

10 And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day.

11 ¶ Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD:

12 And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.

13 In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst.

14 They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth; and, The manner of Beer-sheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again.

Ver. 5. The new moon, &c.] Of that month wherein the fruits of the year were used first to be sold. By *the sabbath* the Chaldee understands the sabbatical year; for, as Grotius observes, that year being past, they who had not money enough to provide for themselves before the year, were compelled to buy the necessaries of life at a very high price from those who had laid up stores.

Ver. 7. Hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob] Or, “By those benefits by which he had conferred honour and distinguished privileges upon Jacob and his posterity.” In this place *excellency* is taken in a good sense; as if the Lord had said, “As I have caused the sons of Jacob to abound with glory and honour, so will I not forget their crimes.”

Ver. 8. And it shall rise up, &c.] And destruction shall rise up like a flood; and it shall be dissolved and drowned as by the river of Egypt. The prophet here refers to the great earthquake, whereof he spoke at the beginning of this book.

Ver. 9, 10. And it shall come to pass, &c.] Times of calamity are frequently expressed by the failing of the light of the sun, and the day's being overpread with darkness. Archbishop Usher has observed, that about eleven years after the time when Amos prophesied, there were two great eclipses of the sun; one at the feast of tabernacles, the other some time before the passover; so that the text may probably be understood of that darkness, used here to typify the dreadful calamities of Israel. We have heretofore observed, that the eastern poets use a variety of expressions very similar to those of the sacred writers. See Ezek. xx. 47. Aboul-Farrage Sangiari, a Persian who lived at the time of the irruption of the

Tartars under Genghiz-Khan, gives this description of those miserable days: “It was a time in which the sun arose in the West; every kind of joy was then banished from the world, and men appeared to be made for no other end but suffering. In all countries through which I have passed, I either found nobody at all, or met only with distressed wretches.” Just so the prophet threatens that God would make the sun go down at noon, &c. *The sun's going down at noon*, and its rising in the West, are different expressions, but of the same import, and serving to illustrate one another; for they both signify how extremely short their time of prosperity would be, how unexpectedly it would terminate, and for how long a time it would be succeeded by suffering, of which darkness was often made the emblem. See *Observations*, p. 322.

Ver. 11. I will send a famine] The prophet here foretels that it should come to pass, that when they were suffering by famine they should inquire for prophets from whom they might hear the word of God; but that no prophets should be found; or if there were any, they should have nothing to deliver them from God, who, during their calamity, would keep a profound silence. See Houbigant.

Ver. 12. They shall wander from sea to sea, &c.] From the west to the south. Houbigant.

Ver. 14. They that swear by the sin of Samaria] The call set up at Beth-el by Jeroboam. Instead of, *The manner of Beer-sheba*, Houbigant reads very properly, *Thy god, O Beer-sheba!* Compare chap. v. 5.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The prophet is called upon to attend to another vision, and, lo! a basket of summer fruit

C H A P. IX.

The certainty of the desolation. The restoring of the tabernacle of David.

[Before Christ 787.]

I SAW the Lord standing upon the altar : and he said, Smite the lintel of the door,

that the posts may shake : and cut them in the head, all of them ; and I will slay the last of them with the sword : he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered.

2 Though they dig into hell, thence shall

fruit flood before him, an emblem of that people ripe for destruction, and ready to be devoured by their enemies.

1. Their end is come : they have been suffered, like fruit, to grow till they were fully ripe, and now are to be spared no longer : God's patience is wearied out, and their ruin determined. Though God bears long, the impenitent sinners' fate will come at last.

2. Their ruin will be terrible. *The songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord God* ; the places where their idols' praises resounded, now shall be filled with shrieks and groans ; and *there shall be many dead bodies in every place, slain by the sword, the famine, or the pestilence : they shall cast them forth with silence* ; without any funeral solemnity, or expression of grief, as if the dead were happier than the living ; or sullenly submitting, because they cannot help themselves ; or bidding others *be silent*, and not take the least notice of what might dishearten the besieged, or encourage their enemies. *Note* ; (1.) Sinful mirth will end in bitter mourning. (2.) God's judgments do often but harden the hearts of the impenitent.

2dly, A people whose iniquities were so flagrant may expect the judgment that they have provoked.

1. Their sins were heinous. *They swallow up the needy by oppression and iniquity ; even to make the poor of the land to fail*, starving them for want of necessary food. So addicted were they to covetousness, that, though they kept up the form of religion, they were tired and weary of the service, longing for the sacred hours of the sabbath and new moons to be gone, that they might resume their work and merchandise, which met with this unwelcome interruption ; nor did they make any conscience how they got their wealth, so they did but get it. They sold by a small measure, *making the ephah small* ; but, when they received money, they would use their own weights, *making the shekel great*, refusing to take it unless it weighed more than it ought ; and falsified *the balances by deceit*, that so the scale might always hang in their favour : and by such fraudulent practices they so impoverished their poor neighbours, that they were forced to sell themselves to these oppressive masters ; they *buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes*, to such necessities were they reduced : *yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat* ; making them take the corn which was not fit for bread, and exacting their own price for it. *Note* ; (1.) Covetousness is destitute of all bowels and mercies. (2.) To a worldly man the sabbath is an irksome day ; and, when he is employed in religious duties, his heart goeth after his covetousness ; and even on his knees the thoughts of business thrust out the thoughts of

God. (3.) He who is destitute of true piety can never be an honest man.

2. Their ruin is sure and terrible, confirmed by the oath of God, who saith, *Surely I will never forget any of their works*, but remember them in terrible judgment : they shewed no mercy, and they shall find none. And woe to the miserable sinner who is under such a curse ! *Shall not the land tremble for this ?* as weary to bear such miscreants upon it, and ready to swallow them up by an earthquake ; see chap. i. 1. ; and *every one mourn that dwelleth therein*, shocked at this inhumanity, or confounded at the judgments sent upon the transgressors ? *It shall rise up wholly as a flood*, the calamity overwhelming the land, as Egypt was covered with the overflowing of the Nile. *And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day* ; in the midst of their prosperity their whole kingdom, with the princes and nobles, shall be destroyed suddenly and unexpectedly : or when these oppressors were in the midst of life and prosperity, death should at a stroke close their eyes in darkness, and send them to the grave. *And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation* ; when, their temples destroyed, their country desolate, themselves captives, every sound of joy would be banished, and with every expressive sign of bitter woe they would bewail their hopeless miseries, *as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day*, no prospect remaining of the removal of these calamities. *Note* ; (1.) Riches got by rapine will in the end bring ruin. (2.) They who will not tremble for the sins of the land shall be made to tremble when the threatened judgment comes. (3.) However high the oppressor may be seated, the flood of God's wrath shall overwhelm him. (4.) The sinner's mirth will end in mourning ; and God sometimes is pleased to arrest him in the midst of his career of prosperity, and by a sudden stroke to send him into darkness.

3dly, We have had already heavy temporal judgments denounced ; but we have also,

1. A spiritual judgment threatened ; *a famine not of bread nor of water, but of hearing the words of the Lord* ; from the time of their last captivity, no more prophets shall appear to them ; having rejected God and his Christ, in vain will they seek for prophets of their own, and pine away in their iniquities, rejected and destitute, as they are this day. *Note* ; (1.) The word of God is the food of immortal souls. (2.) They who have abused the means of grace that they have enjoyed, are justly punished by having them removed. (3.) Among the heaviest curses of God upon a place or nation, is the taking from them the light of

mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down:

3 And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them.

4 And though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good.

5 And the Lord GOD of Hosts is he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt, and all that dwell therein shall mourn: and it shall rise up wholly like a flood; and shall be drowned, as by the flood of Egypt.

6 It is he that buildeth his stories in the heaven, and hath founded his troop in the

earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name.

7 Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith the LORD. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt? and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?

8 Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the LORD.

9 For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.

10 All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.

11 ¶ In that day will I raise up the ta-

of truth, and abandoning them to the blindness and hardness of their own hearts.

2. The ringleaders in idolatry are doomed to destruction. *They that swear by the sin of Samaria*, impious and profane, glorying in their shame, and swearing by their idols which they should have detested, and say, *Thy god, O Dan, liveth, and the manner of Beer-sheba liveth*; making their adjurations by the hated deities there placed, and the worship performed to them; *even they shall fall, and never rise up again*; driven into a captivity from which they never have returned.

CHAP. IX.

Ver. 1. Upon the altar] *Near the altar*. As this prophecy is against the kingdom of Israel, it is probable that this altar was dedicated to the purposes of idolatry, especially as God appears near it, in order to foretel its ruin, and consequently that of the kingdom of Israel. Instead of *lintel*, we may read *chapter*. Instead of, *and cut them in the head*, &c. Houbigant reads, *for I will wound them all in the head, and I will slay their posterity with the sword*.

Ver. 2. Though they dig into hell] *Into the lowest parts of the earth*; the deepest cavern. See Pf. cxxxix. 8. &c.

Ver. 5. And it shall rise up, &c.] See on chap. viii. 8.

Ver. 6. It is he that buildeth, &c.] See the note on Jer. xxii. 13, 14. where it is remarked, from the *Observations*, that the chief rooms of the houses in the East are those above. Perhaps our prophet refers to this circumstance, when he speaks of the heavens as God's *stories* or *chambers*; the most noble and splendid apartments of the palace of God, and where his presence is chiefly manifested; and

the *bundle* or *collection* (the *troop*) of its *offices*, its numerous little mean apartments, the divisions of this earth. Capellus observes, that the word **גִּבְעוֹת** *aguddab*, rendered *troop*, signifies those *store-houses* and *cellars* which are usual in great places: thus, says he, the *heaven* is, as it were, God's place of dwelling, his principal apartment; the *earth* is that to him which the cellars are in a large house.

Ver. 7. Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians] Amos, to take away from the Israelites their false presumption, that the Lord was too much interested in their preservation to prevent their total ruin, says that, in consequence of their infidelity and revolt, God regards them no otherwise than as Ethiopians. "You have rendered yourselves unworthy the name of my people; you have renounced by your idolatry the privileges of that peculiar covenant which I entered into with your fathers; you have given up me, and I give you up in my turn. But, Lord, is it not thou who hast brought us out of Egypt? Yes, doubtless: but have I not also brought up the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir? Yet, are they the more my servants and my people on this account?" See Calmet.

Ver. 9. I will sift the house of Israel] This prophecy remarkably agrees with the present state of the Jews. "I will mingle and scatter the Israelites among all nations, just as good and bad grain are mingled in a sieve; but will so order it, that the good grain (the souls faithful to the grace of God) shall be preserved." See Math. iii. 12. and Lowth.

Ver. 11. In that day, &c.] "After the fall of the kingdom of Israel, that of Judah shall continue for a long time in a flourishing state after their return from the
" capti-

bernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old:

12 That they may possess the remnant of

Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this.

13 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper,

"captivity." But the prophecy has a still farther respect, and carries us beyond the times of the Babylonish captivity, to those of the Lord Jesus Christ; to which it is applied by the best authority possible; see Acts, xv. 16. The *tabernacle of David*, says Houbigant, signifies the church, which consists not only of Jews, but of Gentiles. Some part of this prophecy had its completion in the times of the apostles, and afterwards in the light of the gospel, which shone both upon Jews and Gentiles. The prophecy will then be in a great measure completed, when the *people of Israel* shall return into their own land, and shall *build houses, and plant vineyards and gardens*; ver. 14. But in the great millennium it will have its final accomplishment in the fullest and most glorious sense.

Ver. 13. *Behold, the days come, &c.*] In the note on Neh. iv. 7. we have observed, that the Arabs frequently robbed the countryman of his seed-corn. They treat the fruit-trees after the same manner, and oblige the inhabitants of those countries to gather the fruits before they are ripe, when they apprehend any danger from these mischievous neighbours. Maillet, speaking of the province of Fioume, says, "It is surrounded with Arabs, who frequently make incursions into it, especially in the season in which the fruits begin to ripen, which that district produces in great abundance. It is to save them from the depredations of the Arabs, that the inhabitants of this country gather them *before they come to maturity*, sending them to Cairo, where they find no difficulty to dispose of them, though they are not ripe." This circumstance may perhaps serve to explain the passage before us. *Behold, the days come, &c.*; that is to say, "The days shall come, when the grapes shall not be gathered, as they were wont before to be, in a state of immaturity, for fear of Arabs or other destroying nations; but they shall be suffered to hang even till the time of ploughing, so perfect shall be the security of those times; nor shall the ploughman have any thing to do, after committing the seed to the earth, but wait in undisturbed quiet for the time of reaping; no intervening labours of defence and war separating the harvest from the seed-time." This explanation removes the difficulty which might otherwise arise here; for the rains falling in the beginning of November in the Holy Land, and the sowing following presently after, what would there be astonishing in the *reaper of grapes overtaking, or meeting with him that sowed seed?* since the travels of Egmont and Heyman expressly affirm, that the vintage at Aleppo lasts from the 15th of September to the same day in November; and the vegetable productions of Judæa, Aleppo, and Barbary, are nearly contemporary. It is certain, that, according to those travellers, nothing is more common at Aleppo than this running of the vintage and summer season into one; since in the same page that they affirm the vintage lasted till the

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15th of November, they say, the sowing season begins there towards the close of October, and lasts all November. The grape, however, ripens much sooner; for Dr. Shaw tells us, that in Barbary it is ready for the vintage in September, and *ripens* towards the latter end of July; and consequently, when surrounded with Arabs, Judæa, through fear of them, became obliged to hurry on the vintage. On the other hand, though the grapes of Judæa might be sufficiently ripened for the vintage in common by September; yet it being very well known, that their *hanging long* on the trees makes the wine much the richer, more generous and sweet, the delaying the time of treading the grapes there till the time of sowing, perfectly well answers the latter part of the verse, *And the mountains shall drop sweet wine.* Answerable to this, La Roque found the monks of Canubin, in mount Lebanon, absent from their monastery, for the most part, and busied in their vintage, when he was there, at the end of October, or beginning of November; who are noted for the richness and excellence of their wines. Amos then speaks of their perfect quiet and freedom from disturbances in that country, in those days to which the prophecy relates; whereas all commentators, so far as I have observed, suppose that this passage either expresses the temperateness of the season only, or the abundance of the productions of the earth in those times; neither of which is the complete thought of the prophet, though they may both be indirectly involved in his expression. The following words of *building the waste cities, and inhabiting them, planting vineyards, and drinking the wine of them, &c.* perfectly agree with this explanation. But it very ill suits with the opinion of those who suppose abundance only to be intended; and that the first part of the verse, in that view, only speaks of *abundance of work*, and long-continued ploughing, and says nothing of the plenty of the crop. See *Observations*, p. 54.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The judgments of God against a people devoted to destruction are here fearfully declared.

1. The awful command for the execution of these criminals is issued. *I saw the Lord standing upon the altar, at Beth-el probably, as about to stamp it into powder, and destroy the idols with their worshippers; and he said, Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake, intimating the demolition of the idol temples; and cut them in the head all of them, and I will slay the last of them with the sword, the king, princes, priests, and people who committed idolatry there.*

2. All attempts to escape from God's avenging arm will be fruitless: they shall be arrested in their flight, and no place afford them protection in this day of wrath. Could they dig into hell, it would not conceal them; or could they climb the heights of heaven, thence would he

4 A

drag

and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.

14 And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit *them*; and they

drag them down. The caves or thickets of Carmel could not hide them from his all-piercing eye, nor the depths of the sea cover them: God has even there his instruments of vengeance. Nay, when in a miserable captivity they might have hoped that the vengeance of God would rest, the sword should still pursue them, and make them exchange a wretched life for a more tormenting death. *Note*; When God is against us, it matters not who are for us; they can afford us neither help nor hope.

3. He that pronounces their doom is fully able to execute his threatenings. *The Lord God of Hosts is he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt*: a touch, a frown from him can dissolve the earth, or deluge it with waters; and all that dwell therein shall mourn in bitterness the loss of all their substance, and whatever is dear to them besides, swallowed up in the flood of his judgments. *It is he, that great Creator of all, that buildeth his stories in the heaven*, like a stately palace reared by his power and supported by his providence; and hath founded his troops in the earth, all things here below being the instruments of his pleasure, and ready to execute his commands: *he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth*, to descend in tempests from the clouds, or burst from the bosom of the deep to punish guilty mortals: *the Lord is his name*, able to perform all the purposes of his will. As happy and safe as it is to have him for our friend, so miserable and fatal must it be to have him for our enemy.

4. Their iniquities had cut them off from their former honourable relation to this Almighty God. They were become, by their sins, like Ethiopians, spiritually black, guilty, and unholy; nor should they count upon the mercies which God had shewed in bringing them from Egypt, as if these were so peculiarly distinguishing, or insured his future favour; for he had brought *the Philistines from Caphtor*, the place of their nativity, or whither they had been carried captives; and *the Assyrians from Kir*, the land of their captivity, 2 Kings, xvi. 9. Yet neither of these nations would escape at last his judgments. For, *behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom*, on every guilty land, especially on Israel, whose guilt was most aggravated; and *I will destroy it from off the face of the earth*, as was done by Salmanser. *Note*; When professors degenerate, and in spirit depart from God, their privileges will stand them in no stead, but rather aggravate their guilt beyond that of the vilest heathens.

5. A remnant of Israel, even those who have preserved their fidelity, shall be preserved amid the general ruin. *I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Lord*; his eyes behold the men that sigh, and cry for all the abominations of the land; and they shall be hid in the day of his fierce anger. *For lo, I will command, by his overruling providence, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve*; all the afflictions coming upon them shall be so ordered as to separate the precious from the vile; yet shall not the least grain fall upon

the earth, all the truly faithful shall be preserved; but *all the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us*, so daring in wickedness were they grown; but shall find, to their everlasting confusion, the vanity of their impious boasts. *Note*; When the sinner most confidently flatters himself with assurances of impunity, there is a lie in his right hand, and vengeance is at his heels.

2dly, With one bright beam of hope the prophesy closes, and, in the promised Messiah, still a glorious prospect remains of Israel's restoration; for to him bear all the prophets witness.

1. In the Messiah shall the glory of David's throne be restored. *In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof, and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old*; to what event this refers we can have no doubt, having an infallible interpreter for our guide; Acts, xv. 16. When Christ came into the world, the church, the spiritual kingdom of our David, was apparently fallen as low as the royal family whence the Redeemer sprung; but in and by him the breaches were repaired, the gospel of the kingdom was preached at his command, and religion revived its drooping head, and shone more gloriously than in the brightest days of old. Nor were the higher privileges of grace now confined to one nation or people; but Gentiles, as well as Jews, became the happy subjects of Christ's peculiar kingdom—the Christian church. *A remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen*, will now become the church's possession in this high and glorious sense, and be called by the name of Christ, admitted into the fellowship and privileges of the gospel, *saith the Lord who doeth this*, whose power and grace can and will accomplish what he hath promised for every faithful soul; and blessed be his name for what we have seen of the fulfilment hereof, and shall see daily, till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and all the faithful Israel of God be finally saved.

2. The most abundant measure of spiritual blessings in these last days will be diffused, signified by images of the most abundant plenty; the harvest and vintage being so vast, that it should continue till seed-time again, and the very mountains, as if dissolved, pour down streams of wine, and milk, and honey; the gifts, the graces, and consolations of the holy spirit in the times of the gospel, being bestowed in a more eminent and extensive manner than ever before; but more especially in the last days, and during the glorious millennium, to which the conclusion of this chapter particularly refers.

3. The captivity of Israel will then be at an end; they shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, and help to build the walls of the spiritual temple; enjoying, as members of the church of Christ, that peace, prosperity, and plenty of heavenly blessings, which would be better than the fruit of gardens or vineyards: though this may also be well referred to the literal accomplishment of the prophesy, when the

Jews

shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

15 And I will plant them upon their

land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God.

Jews converted to Christ in the latter day will be *planted upon their own land*, and enjoy all that outward prosperity here described.

4. This happy estate of God's Israel during this blessed millennium shall suffer no interruption. *They shall no more*

be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God; he will preserve them from corruptions within, as well as from their spiritual enemies without; God, their God, their covenant God, shall fulfil all his promises unto them.

THE BOOK
OF THE
PROPHET OBADIAH.

THE Scripture gives us no information concerning the life or death of this prophet, of the time when he lived, of his country, or his mission; all that the Jewish writers say concerning him is totally uncertain, and not at all to be relied upon. There is a great similarity in this small portion of his writings which remains, and what is contained in the forty-ninth chapter of Jeremiab; to which we refer the reader.

The destruction of Edom, for their pride, and for their wrong to Jacob. The salvation and victory of Jacob.

THE vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the LORD GOD concerning Edom; We have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle.

2 Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised.

3 ¶ The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?

4 Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD.

5 If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not

have stolen till they had enough? if the grape-gatherers came to thee, would they not leave some grapes?

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

7 All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; they that eat thy bread have laid a wound under thee: there is none understanding in him.

8 Shall I not in that day, saith the LORD, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau?

9 And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter.

10 ¶ For thy violence against thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever.

Ver. 1. We have heard a rumour, &c.] See Jer. xlix. 14.

Ver. 3. Thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock] He that dwelleth, &c.—hath said in his heart, &c. St. Jerome informs us, that all the southern part of Palestine was full of caverns scooped out of the rocks, and of subterraneous abodes, where the inhabitants dwelt. The Edomites are here addressed by the prophet as inhabiting these caverns.

Ver. 5. If thieves came, &c.] When thieves come to thee,

when nightly robbers, when thou art laid to rest, will they not plunder as much as shall seem good to them? When the grape-gatherers shall come to thee, will they leave no grapes? How bigant.

Ver. 7. All the men, &c.] They have driven thee even to the border; all the men of thy confederacy have betrayed thee; have prevailed over thee: The men of thy peace, of thy bread, have spread a snare under thee: There is no understanding in thee.

Ver.

11 In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them.

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

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

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

15 For the day of the LORD is near upon

all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head.

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

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

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

19 And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain the Philistines: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin shall possess Gilead.

20 And the captivity of this host of the

Ver. 11. In the day that thou stoodest, &c.] Thou stoodest on the other side in the day that strangers, &c. The prophet considers the Chaldeans as preparing for the siege of Jerusalem, and demanding succours from the neighbouring people; particularly the Edomites.

Ver. 12—14. But thou shouldest not have looked on] Houbigant reads the verbs in these verses in the imperative mood. *Look not—rejoice not, &c.* Instead of, *Nor have laid hands on, &c.* *ver. 13.* Houbigant reads, *Be not thou sent against his army, when the day of his ruin is at hand.* We have, under no affliction or calamity, more need of support and assistance from the good Spirit of God how to behave ourselves, than in those seasons, when they who have most maliciously persecuted us, and are in all considerations very bad men, fall under some extraordinary misery, and suffer as much as they desired to see us suffer. *Thou shouldest not have rejoiced over the children of Judah, &c.* If our joy has a mixture of insolence toward the persons of those who suffer (how justly soever), as men who have done us wrong, and so we are glad of their misery as a revenge for what they have done against us, we exceed our commission, and have no kind of warrant for such rejoicing. No degree of malice, or ill nature, or wickedness in other men, can excuse us for a defect of that charity and meekness and compassion, which ought ever to be inseparable from our religion.

Ver. 16. For as ye have drunk, &c.] For as I have given my wine to drink in my holy mountain, so, &c.

Ver. 17. The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.]

Shall possess what they had before possessed; that is to say, their return from the Babylonish captivity.

Ver. 20. And the captivity of this host] *And those very children of Israel, who had been captives to the Canaanites, even to Zarephath, and the captives of Jerusalem, who shall have been in Sepharad, [that is to say, as some suppose, a province of Babylon] shall possess, &c.* Houbigant. The prophet here foretels what might seem almost incredible; namely, that those very Jews who shall go into captivity, shall hereafter possess all the countries here mentioned; particularly those of the Edomites, whose kingdom they should destroy. All which, by universal agreement, was fulfilled in the primary sense under the Maccabees, who are literally meant by the *saviours* or *deliverers* mentioned in the next verse: but these were types of the Lord Jesus Christ and his Gospel ministers, and of the increase of his work unto the establishment of his universal reign.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, *The vision of Obadiah concerning Edom*, the inveterate enemy of God's people of old, and probably the type and figure of all the antichristian foes, whether Papal, Pagan, or Mahometan, which, like these of old, shall utterly be destroyed at the last.

1. An ambassador is sent among the heathen, to gather them together to battle against Idumea; either the prophet, or some other minister of Providence, or a herald dispatched by Nebuchadnezzar to summon his warriors to assemble, and his confederates to come to his assistance; see

children of Israel *shall possess* that of the captivity of Jerusalem, which *is* in Sepharad, Canaanites, *even* unto Zarephath; and the shall possess the cities of the south.

see Jer. xlix. 14, 15. for when God has work to do, he has in his hands instruments ever ready.

2. Edom shall be ruined, and all her confidences shall fail, for God is her enemy. Her heathen neighbours shall treat her as little and contemptible; and, though she flatters herself that they have the same high opinion of her as she has of herself, *her pride hath deceived her*, as it generally does those who fancy that others value them as much as they do themselves. She thought, because her situation was strong, amid high rocks, where nature as well as art contributed to her security, that she could there defy the impotent attacks of all her foes. Thus sinners, secure in self-confidence, despise the wrath which is ready to overtake them: but, though she was as high on the rock as the eagle's nest, yea, though her battlements reached to the stars, *thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord*, before whose judgments the proudest sinner cannot stand. Her wealth shall become a prey to her enemies; and the ravages of the Chaldeans shall utterly spoil the country. Though robbers by night plunder a house, they leave some things behind, and the most careful grape-gatherers cannot glean every cluster; but these shall ransack every secret place, and spare nothing, leaving the land bare as a rock. Do the Edomites place dependence on their allies? they will disappoint their expectations: though they received their ambassadors with respect, and attended them to their borders, or joined their forces as auxiliaries, and marched to the borders of Edom as if to fight their enemies, receiving subsidies and provision from the Edomites, and pretending firm attachment to their cause, yet will they betray it, desert to their invaders, and turn their arms against those who hired them; who, while they lean on them as a support, shall feel from their pretended friendly arm, a secret mortal wound. Not all the wisdom of their wise men, nor the courage of their warriors, will then be able to avail them: God hath infatuated the counsels of the one, and panic fear seizes the others, doomed to the slaughter; so that not a man of them shall escape. Thus when God contends, he will surely overcome: our wisdom will prove folly, our strength weakness, our confidence delusion, when he is our foe.

2dly, If Edom's doom be heavy, her sins have provoked it; and, amidst all the other iniquities of that devoted people, none come deeper into the account than their *violence against their brother Jacob*, whose relation to them by blood, and the peculiar favour which God had shewn him, should have engaged their affection and assistance in the day of calamity; but too often we see that nearest relations shew us the least regard.

1. They had, with most malicious enmity, rejoiced in the ruin of Israel; and, in a variety of instances, helped forward their distress. God tells them what *they should not have done*, and therein upbraids them with what *they had done*. Instead of affording the Jews a friendly hand, or at least commiserating their calamity, and dropping a tear of tender compassion over their afflictions, they stood *on the other side*, not merely unconcerned spectators, but

pleased with the scene, and helping forward the ruin of Jerusalem, when the Chaldeans entered the city, led the inhabitants captive, and divided the spoil; nay, they insulted the unhappy sufferers, and mocked at their distress. Eager to plunder, they rushed with the besiegers into the city, and pillaged whatever they laid their hands upon; and, with savage inhumanity, stood in the cross-way to seize the few who escaped from the Chaldean sword, and murdered them in cold blood, or delivered them up to their cruel enemies. For such atrocious wickedness,

2. Vengeance, such as their crimes deserved, descends upon them. *The day of the Lord*, that great and terrible day of wrath, approaches, when he will recompense the wickedness of the heathen, and Edom shall drink deep of the cup of his indignation. Since judgment had begun at the house of God, Edom must not think to escape! *As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee*; when other heathen nations are destroyed, Edom shall fall in the general ruin; and, while the Jews were only captives for a while, and would be again restored, and preserved still as a people, the Edomites' shame would be *continual*; they shall be cut off for ever, *and be as though they had not been*, their nation extirpated, and not a trace of them remaining. And thus shall the enemies of Christ and his church be at last destroyed for ever; and every antichristian foe shall be cast as a millstone into the sea, and sink, and never rise up again. Rev. xviii. 21.

3dly, The same cloud, which looked so dark and terrible toward the Egyptians, afforded brightness and comfort to Israel's camp. Thus the destruction of the church's enemies, before threatened, is accompanied with great and precious promises to her friends, in which, to the latest ages, they may rejoice.

1. *Upon mount Zion shall be deliverance*. God will raise up a deliverer for them in distress, as Cyrus, and afterwards Judas Maccabeus; but a greater deliverance than these seems here intended, even that which Jesus hath obtained for his faithful people from the bondage of Satan, sin, and death.

2. *And there shall be holiness*, in the Gospel church, in consequence of the deliverance obtained for them: all Christ's faithful people shall partake of the sanctifying influences of his Spirit, and be made pure within; this being a distinguished part of the salvation which he has wrought, that we should be delivered from sin, as well as guilt and punishment.

3. The church of true believers shall be extended far and wide. *The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions*; as was spiritually the case when, by the preaching of the ministers of the Gospel, the gentiles gave themselves up unto the Lord: then, like fire, the word of God spread on every side, the hearts of sinners were pierced, their most beloved sins consumed, and the borders of the church were then greatly enlarged: and they shall continue to be so, till at last they shall spread from pole to pole; when *the servants*, those who publish the glad tidings of salvation, shall go forth, clothed with divine energy, convincing men of sin, and

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

and turning them unto the Lord; and then the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and his Christ.

Some suppose that the prophesy refers also to the conversion of the Jews in the last days, and to their return to their own land: that their borders will then be greatly enlarged; and, judgment being executed upon all the persecuting powers, Papal, Pagan, and Mahometan, Christ

shall reign on mount Zion, and *over his ancients gloriously.* This, however, at least we are sure of, that the day of the Lord will come, *which shall burn as an oven, when all the proud persecutors, and all who do wickedly, shall be consumed together, and God's despised and persecuted but faithful saints shall reign with Jesus their king in glory everlasting.*

THE BOOK
OF THE
PROPHET JONAH.

JONAH was a Galilean, a native of Gath-hepher, which is thought to be the same with Jotapata, celebrated for the siege which Josephus the historian maintained against the Roman army. Gath-hepher was situated in the land of Zebulon, where was the canton of Ophir or Hepher. Jonah lived in the days of Jeroboam and Joash, kings of Israel; but we know little certain concerning him, excepting what is delivered in this prophecy, which is chiefly historical; containing nothing poetical, or similar to the usual prophetic style, except the prayer in the second chapter.

C H A P. I.

Jonah, sent to Nineveh, fleeth to Tarshish: he is discovered by a tempest, thrown into the sea, and swallowed by a fish.

[Before Christ 862.]

NOW the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

4 ¶ But the LORD sent out a great wind

into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.

5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

6 So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.

7 And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

C H A P. I.

Ver. 2. Go to Nineveh—and cry against it] Or preach. It means the same as to prophesy; and therefore Houbigant so renders it.

Ver. 3. Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish] Which, according to Josephus, was Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia. Others say Tartessus in Spain. From the presence of the Lord, Houbigant reads, Through fear of the Lord. What he feared is shewn in chap. iv. 2. He hoped that if he was at a greater distance God would send some other prophet to preach repentance to the city of Nineveh.

Grotius says, that the expression means, "From the land of Israel," the immediate residence of God.

Ver. 5. And cried every man unto his god] The mariners were idolaters, as appears from the next verse. They invoked each one his idol, or the tutelary deity of his country. The profound sleep of Jonah seems to have been caused by his weariness, labour, and anxiety; "Not the sleep of security, but of sorrow," says St. Jerome; like that of the apostles, Matt. xxvi. 40.

Ver. 7. Come, and let us cast lots] The sailors betake themselves to this practice, because they see that there is some-

8 Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil *is* upon us; What *is* thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what *is* thy country? and of what people *art* thou?

9 And he said unto them, I *am* an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry *land*.

10 Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

11 ¶ Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous.

12 And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest *is* upon you.

13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring *it* to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.

14 Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee.

15 So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.

16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.

17 ¶ Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

something supernatural in the tempest; whence they conclude that it arose on account of some wicked person who failed with them. Thus the sailors who carried Diagoras in their vessel concluded that the tempest which assailed them was principally on account of this philosopher, who openly professed atheism. God is pleased so to order the lots, that Jonah is found to be the guilty person.

Ver. 8. For whose cause? Wherefore, or on what account. Houbigant.

Ver. 9. And I fear the Lord, &c.] Rather, I fear Jehovah, &c. Jehovah being the peculiar name of the true God, by which he was distinguished from those who had the names of gods and lords among the heathen. The words immediately following are a farther distinction between the true God and the gods of the heathen. See Lowth, and Grotius.

Ver. 11. Wrought, and was tempestuous] Grew more and more tempestuous: and so ver. 13.

Ver. 14. Let us not perish, &c.] "Impute not to us his death: we only obey thy orders, and do that which thou thyself hast ordained. It is the necessity of a just defence which obliges us to cast him into the sea, to preserve us from the imminent danger whereunto we are brought by his means."

Ver. 16. And offered a sacrifice, &c.] Houbigant, following the Hebrew, Vulgate, &c. ends the chapter with this verse.

Ver. 17. Now the Lord had prepared a great fish] That there are fishes large enough to swallow a man, there can be no question; the Scripture calls this a great fish, in the general, and therefore there is no need to confine it to a whale. But we shall speak more on this subject, when we come to Matt. xii. 40. See also Calmet's dissertation on Vol. IV.

the subject, and Scheuchzer. We may just observe farther, that the Hebrew language has no one word to express what we call a natural day: so that what the Greeks express by *νύχθημερον*, they denote by a day and a night: therefore the space of time consisting of one whole revolution of twenty-four hours, and part of two others, is fitly expressed in that language by three days and three nights. Such a space of time our blessed Lord lay in the grave; that is to say, one whole *νύχθημερον*, or natural day, and part of two others: and we may thence conclude that Jonah, who was an eminent figure of him in this particular, continued no longer in the belly of the fish. But on this point we shall say more when we come to speak of our Saviour's resurrection.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. The prophet's name and parentage: *יונה* *Jonah*, a dove. God's prophets should be harmless as these, and, like the dove of Noah, bring the olive-branch of peace, the tidings of mercy and salvation to perishing sinners: his father's name was *אמיטאי* *Ammittai*, my truth: for prophets must be sons of truth faithful to their office, and steady to maintain the truths of God.

2. His mission. *The word of the Lord came unto him, bidding him arise, and go to Nineveh, that great city, the metropolis of the Assyrian empire, where wickedness abounded, as in great cities it usually does, the multitudes of sinners serving to embolden and stimulate each other to commit iniquity. It was now ripe for vengeance, and he must go and cry aloud in the streets, to give the inhabitants warning of their approaching doom unless they repented.*

3. His disobedience. He rose up to flee from the presence

C H A P. II.

The prayer of Jonah : he is delivered from the fish.

[Before Christ 862.]

THEN Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly,

of the Lord, from the chosen land, where God was pleased in an especial manner to reveal himself, to *Tarsibis*; either Tarsus in Cilicia, or the sea, determined to ship himself in the first vessel, and fly any where rather than go to Nineveh. Either he dreaded the dangers of the service; or rather, as he suggests, chap. iv. 2. he knew God's compassions, that the Ninevites would be forgiven, and himself be counted a false prophet. A ship was ready to sail as soon as he arrived at Joppa, and he instantly paid the fare and embarked. Providence seemed to concur with his desires: but the ready way is not always the right way; and they who fly from duty, whatever present relief they may gain, are only treasuring up for themselves greater sorrow.

2dly, They who think to fly from God will soon perceive the folly of the attempt.

1. God sends a mighty tempest on the ship in which the prophet sailed, so that it seemed ready each moment to founder. Such storms does sin raise in the conscience; and the poor sinner in despondence is ready to give himself up for lost, little suspecting that the very tempest, which he imagines will be his ruin, is only designed to drive him to the haven of rest.

2. Jonah alone seemed unconcerned about the danger. The mariners, affrighted, ran to their prayers, and cried to their idols for help: for the imminent views of death will sometimes bring those to their knees who never thought of bowing them before; and, life being dearer to them than all besides, they readily part with their merchandise, and cast it into the sea to lighten the ship. Worldly goods are nothing worth when death stares men in the face: what folly then, for the sake of them, to make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, and lose an immortal soul, infinitely more precious than the dying body! When will men be wise? The roaring billows, which terrified the heathen seamen, joined perhaps with the grating sorrows of his mind, served but to rock Jonah asleep: he of all that company appeared the only person insensible, though none had so much cause to be alarmed. Into such stupefaction does sin sometimes lull the conscience of the backslider. He appears to have lost all apprehension of danger; and even the judgments which make others tremble, he seems to pass over unaffected. From such blindness and hardness of heart, good Lord, deliver us!

3. The ship-master rouses him from his slumbers, and upbraids him with his insensibility. *What meanest thou, O sleeper?* Strange that a prophet of the Lord should need reproof even from the mouth of a heathen! *Arise, call upon thy God:* delay is ruinous when danger urges. They had cried to their gods in vain; perhaps his was more able to help them; if so be that God will think upon us that we perish not, as, without immediate help, they knew they must. *Note;* No danger is so great, but, if God think upon us, he is able to save us to the uttermost.

11

2 And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.

3 For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed

4. The storm increasing, notwithstanding all their endeavours and prayers, they began to suspect that there might be among them some atrocious sinner, on whose account the divine displeasure pursued them. As was usual with the heathens, therefore, they resolved to inquire which of them it was, and to refer the decision to the lot; and God so ordained that the lot fell upon Jonah. Thus is the iniquity of the sinner often found out by means that he never suspected, and when he thinks himself most secure and best concealed from detection.

5. They hereupon strictly interrogate the prophet. The lot had said, This is the man, and he is called upon to acknowledge his crime, that they might know for whose cause, or for what cause, this evil was upon them; what he had done to provoke God; what was his occupation; whence he came; and to what country he belonged. *Note;* In order to get our troubles removed, we must search diligently into our sins, which are the cause of them.

6. Jonah, without reserve, makes confession of his crime; and probably, now convicted in his own conscience, desired to take to himself all the shame and punishment which he felt that he had deserved. He declares himself by nation and religion a Hebrew, which was an aggravation of his guilt; his occupation was that of a prophet of the Most High, *I fear the Lord Jehovah, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land;* which, though it added to his sin, yet he owns to God's glory, and in order to the instruction of the heathen mariners, who blindly worshipped many gods, instead of the one true and living Jehovah. His crime he owns: *he had told them that he fled from the presence of the Lord,* rebellious to his command, and running from his duty; for which this judgment was sent. *Note;* When we have sinned, nothing remains but to justify God in his judgments, and with penitence to bow into the dust.

7. The seamen appear exceedingly affected with his narrative. Probably they had heard what the God of the Hebrews had done of old; and this increased their terrors. With just upbraidings, therefore, of the prophet, who by his wickedness had brought them into this imminent danger, they expostulate with him, *Why hast thou done this? why didst thou so foolishly attempt to fly? and why embark with us, to involve us with thyself in danger.* *Note;* (1.) They who profess religion, and act unsuitably, deserve to be reproached. (2.) None know how extensive and dangerous the consequence of even a single sin may be.

3dly, The criminal is detected by his own confession; the question is, what is to be done with him?

1. They refer the matter to himself. Since he was a prophet of the God of the Hebrews, he best could inform them what was the likeliest means to appease his anger, and thereby obtain deliverance from the storm, which

raged

me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me.

4 Then I said, I am cast out of thy fight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.

5 The waters compassed me about, *even* to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.

6 I went down to the bottoms of the moun-

tains; the earth with her bars *was* about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.

7 When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.

8 They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.

raged more furiously than ever. *Note*; When by our sins we have raised a storm of wrath around us, it highly imports us to inquire how it may be appeased.

2. Jonah pronounces his own doom. He well knew himself to be the troubler, and that, till he was cast into the sea, there could be no hope of the storm's abating; and therefore he bids them throw him overboard: he would not be his own destroyer; yet, conscious that he deserved to die, he offers himself for execution; and chooses rather himself to perish, than involve the innocent in destruction. *Note*; (1.) They who truly know the evil of sin, and are deeply humbled under it, are ready to submit to any shame or suffering, whereby God may be glorified, and reparation be made to the injured. (2.) When sin has raised a storm, we must never hope for peace till the accursed thing is removed.

3. Very unwilling to execute this grievous sentence, the mariners rowed hard for land; but the more they strove, the more the sea wrought, and was tempestuous; so that despair took place in every countenance, and nothing remained but this last experiment, with which they felt the more reluctance to comply on account of the noble simplicity and deep humiliation which now probably appeared in the penitent prophet. *Note*; (1.) When a gracious man, overtaken with a fault, with frank acknowledgment makes shame to himself, he is entitled to our greatest compassion; nor should we ever by severity aggravate his distress. (2.) There is no striving against God's counsels: his will must be done.

4. Before they execute the dread decree, they present their importunate supplications to God, that he would not impute to them innocent blood, nor cause them to perish for taking away this man's life; when they had desired to know his will, and acted now, according to the best of their light, in conformity thereto; it appearing to be his pleasure that Jonah should be cast into the sea. *Note*; (1.) In all our emergencies we must have recourse to God in prayer. (2.) When we follow, according to our best knowledge, under the guidance of Divine Providence, what appears to be God's will, we are bound with satisfaction to trust him with the issue.

5. Jonah is cast into the sea, and, to the astonishment of the mariners, instantly the storm ceased. *They feared the Lord exceedingly*, amazed at the sudden change; and, filled with thankfulness, offered an immediate sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, and made vows of future oblations whenever they should reach the shore. Thus, sometimes, our greatest loss proves our greatest gain. The acquaintance which they hereby gained with Israel's God amply compensated for the damage that they had sustained by the storm.

6. By a miracle the prophet's life is preserved, God, who designed not to destroy but save him, had prepared a great fish, which swallowed him alive; and by almighty power he was preserved three days and three nights, at least part of three days, unhurt in the fish's stomach, a monument of divine mercy, and an illustrious type of him, who, when he had given his life a ransom for others, lay so long in the grave, and rose again the third day, *Matt.* xii. 40.

CHAP. II.

Ver. 1. Then Jonah prayed, &c.] The following prayer was conceived and formed, as to substance, in the belly of the fish, and probably afterwards digested and written in its present mode; a thanksgiving for his deliverance being added at the end of it. Houbigant very properly reads the verbs in the following verse in the present tense, because, says he, Jonah is said to pray when in the belly of the fish. By the *belly of hell*, is meant the lowest parts, of the deep, or place which was to Jonah as the grave.

Ver. 4. Then I said, I am cast out, &c.] "My first apprehensions were, that as I had justly forfeited thy favour for my disobedience, so thou wouldst cast me out of thy protection. But, upon recollecting myself, I thought it my duty not to despair of thy mercy, but to direct my prayer toward thy heavenly habitation: for I have the strongest confidence, since thou hast thus far saved me, that I shall look again towards thy holy temple." There is a great similarity between this prayer of Jonah and many expressions in the Psalms.

Ver. 5. The waters compassed me, &c.] Jonah, as we have before observed, speaks this in the bowels of the fish; therefore they seem to mistake the matter, who say that Jonah speaks this in the midst of the sea, before he was swallowed by the fish. The fish swallowed up Jonah, when first he fell to the bottom of the sea, involved with sea-weed, into which he fell. Houbigant. But why may not this (as well as the following verse, which must necessarily be so) be understood figuratively and poetically, describing his situation in the deep, when in the belly of the fish?

Ver. 6. The earth with her bars was about me, &c.] Houbigant connects the word rendered for ever, with bars, and reads, *The earth, with her everlasting bars, was about me, &c.* But others give the passage another turn, and render it thus, *The earth with her bars would have been about me for ever; but thou broughtest up, &c.*

Ver. 8. Forsake their own mercy, &c.] "They who worship idols abandon the mercy of God, render it useless, and reject it, even though offered to them and always

9 But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay *that* that I have vowed. Salvation *is* of the LORD.

10 ¶ And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

“ready to save them.” Houbigant reads the last clause, *Have forsaken their benefactor*: and he supposes that Jonah applies this to the mariners who prayed to their gods, before they knew that the true God of heaven and earth, who had raised the storm, was the same who appeased it.

Ver. 9. But I will sacrifice unto thee] Not to other gods, as the mariners did to their deities. *Salvation is of the Lord*, and not of those false gods to whom these idolatrous sailors (except in the instance here recorded) offered their vows and prayers. See Psal. l. 14. Hosea, xiv. 2.

Ver. 10. And the Lord spake unto the fish] The power of the Almighty is frequently represented in Scripture, as bringing things to pass by his bare word and command; he speaks, and it is done. Various are the traditions of the Orientals, respecting the place where Jonah was disembogued; but, as Calmet well observes, amidst such doubt and obscurity, the best part is absolute silence, and the sincere declaration that the matter is entirely unknown. Bishop Huet supposes, that Jonah's deliverance from the fish's belly gave occasion to the famous Greek fable of Arion, who, after he was cast into the sea, was conveyed, as the story goes, by a dolphin into the port of Corinth; and it is certain that a great part of the heathen mythology was borrowed from the Scripture history.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Never, to appearance, was situation more desperate than when Jonah was cast into the stormy ocean, unless it were when he descended into the fish's belly: yet even in the lowest state of misery God can save; and Jonah now is as safe in the monster's stomach, as if he were on dry land; and finds both power to pray, and fervent desires after the Lord his God, who thus plainly shewed him that he had not abandoned him to destruction, and thereby engaged him to exercise faith in his pardoning grace and preserving providence. *Note*; (1.) No place can shut out the soul from communion with God; wherever we are, the way to a throne of grace is open. (2.) Our encouragement to draw near to God is, the humble persuasion that he is our God, reconciled to us, and willing to hear and help us in every time of need.

1. He cried and was heard: *I cried by reason of mine affliction*. This was the blessed means of driving him to God. *Out of the belly of hell cried I*, out of the belly of the fish, where he seemed buried as in his grave; and *thou hearest my voice*, for no prayer of faith returns without an answer of peace.

2. He describes his distressed situation, sunk in the deep, buried in the midst of the seas, compassed with the floods, and all the waves and billows running over him. And this was God's doing. His life appeared in the most imminent danger: he was inclosed with waters, and his head wrapped with sea-weeds; *he went down to the bottoms of the mountains*, when the fish descended; and *the bars of the earth*, so deep he sunk, appeared to be about him for ever: his state helpless and hopeless. To such distress are

God's dearest children sometimes reduced, to shew them more eminently the power and grace of God engaged for their deliverance.

3. His heart began to fail him. God's displeasure, seen in his wretched case, discouraged him, and he feared that he was abandoned, and *cast out of God's sight*, as he knew that he had justly deserved to be. Thus when outward trials oppress us, we too often give way to unbelief, and are sore beset with inward fears, as if God had utterly forsaken us, and hid his face in displeasure: but it is our privilege to be always happy: the faithful soul is not thus cast down.

4. His heart is encouraged, notwithstanding, to trust still in God; and, in the exercise of faith he directs his prayer to heaven, whence alone his help could come. When his soul fainted, he *remembered the Lord*, thought upon his power to save, *reflected* on the riches of his grace, and his own past *experience*; and thus his hopes revived, his fears were silenced. And in the same way must every child of God overcome his unbelieving fears; remembering his power and love, who has engaged to save to the uttermost all that trust in him.

5. His prayer was answered; it entered into the holy temple above, and God in mercy regarded his suffering servant, as he gratefully acknowledges to the glory of the Lord his God. *Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption*; either this he said in the fish's belly, and it speaks the language of his faith, assured that God would interpose to save him; or when he afterwards was cast on the land, and wrote down this prayer and complaint, he added this to the praise of the glory of God, and for the confirmation and encouragement of others in the like case; that they might see that none ever trusted God, and were confounded.

6. He gives a warning to others of the vanity of idols, and declares the blessedness of dependance upon God. *They that observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercy*: no idols can save after this sort. Perhaps he intended also herein to reflect upon his own folly in flying from God, whose work would have been its own reward, while misery is the sure attendant on every departure from him.

7. He solemnly engages to offer the grateful sacrifice of praise, and to discharge the vow that he had made in trouble; which might be, some sacrifice that he would offer at the temple of Jerusalem, or his resolution to go without delay to Nineveh in obedience to God's command. *Note*; (1.) Thanksgiving and praise are a tribute that we owe, and should without ceasing pay to the God of our mercies. (2.) Every truly penitent backslider who rises from his falls, should set himself with redoubled earnestness to the work and service of God.

8. He concludes with ascribing glory to God, *Salvation is of the Lord*, and from him alone the temporal, spiritual, and eternal salvation of the faithful is to be expected, even from his power and love, and to be acknowledged to his glory. And they who depend on him for all, shall find,

by

C H A P. III.

Jonah, sent again, preacheth to the Ninevites. Upon their repentance, God relenteth.

[Before Christ 862.]

AND the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying,

2 Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.

3 So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey.

4 And Jonah began to enter into the city a

by blessed experience, that he has never failed them who trust him.

2dly, In answer to his prayer, he is discharged from his prison. He who commanded the fish to receive him, now obliges him to disgorge his prey; and once more the prophet is safe on shore, as one raised from the dead. Thus God restores the poor broken-hearted sinner, when he is often ready to despair of himself; and raises him from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. Jonah's deliverance was also a type of the resurrection of Jesus, and is a pledge of ours. When we see what God has done for him, we need not think it incredible that he should raise our bodies from the dust: and this miracle, astonishing as it is, appears the less wonderful, when we recollect that it was intended as a very peculiar type of Christ's resurrection, the ground of all our hopes. The greatest exertion of Omnipotence may be expected, where the mission of the Saviour of the world, who is the great Creator and Supporter of the universe, was to be in any measure established thereby.

C H A P. III.

Ver. 3. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city] The account here given of Nineveh is confirmed by the testimony of heathen authors. Strabo says, that Nineveh was much greater even than Babylon: and Diodorus Siculus affirms, that its builder, Ninus, proposed to build a city of such magnitude, that it should not only be the greatest of the cities which were then in the world; but that none of those who should be born after that time, attempting the like, should easily exceed it: and a little after he subjoins, that nobody afterwards built such a city, either as to the greatness of the compass, or the magnificence of the walls. It is here said, that it was *of three days' journey*; that is to say, of three days' journey in circuit. Diodorus asserts, that the whole circuit of Nineveh was four hundred and eighty furlongs, which make somewhat more than sixty miles; and sixty miles were three days' journey, twenty miles a day being the common computation for a foot-traveller in the eastern countries. See Bishop Newton, vol. i. p. 254.

Ver. 4. Yet forty days, &c.] In most of the threats of

day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

5 ¶ So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

6 For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered *him* with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

7 And he caused *it* to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water:

God, there is always a condition expressed or understood. It is expressed Jer. xviii. 8. It is understood in the passage before us.

Ver. 5. So the people of Nineveh believed God] The fame of the wonderful works which God had wrought for the Jews, was spread over the eastern parts of the world. This might induce the Ninevites to hearken to a man of that nation, who came to them as sent from God; especially as he, doubtless, gave them an account of the miraculous circumstances which attended his mission. But certainly a sense of their own guilt, and of their deserving whatever punishment heaven could inflict, was a principal reason that moved them to have a regard for his message. Moreover, by the men of Nineveh's repenting at the preaching of Jonah, God designed to upbraid the stubbornness of his own people; and shame them, as *it were*, into repentance, lest the men of Nineveh should rise up in judgment against them, as our blessed Saviour speaks of the Jews in his time. Houbigant reads the last clause of this verse, *From the highest to the lowest of the people, or from the nobles to the commonalty.*

Ver. 6. For word came unto the king of Nineveh] *For word had come*, or, *For the thing had reached unto*, &c. This king most probably was Pul, the father of Sardanapalus, who, dying about the year of the world 3237; might have been upon the throne at the time when Jonah went to Nineveh; for this happened under Jeroboam the second. See Calmet, and Usher.

Ver. 7. Let neither man nor beast—taste any thing] This was carrying their abstinence to a greater severity than what we find practised among the Jews; for though in times of public calamity, and on the day of solemn expiation, we find that they made their children fast, as we may gather from Joel, ii. 16.; yet we nowhere read of their extending that rigour to their cattle. Virgil indeed, in his fifth eclogue, brings in a shepherd telling his companion, that for the death of Julius Cæsar the mourning was so general, that even the sheep and other creatures were not driven to water: but possibly this may be looked upon as a poetical exaggeration. From Homer and other ancient authors we learn, that when any hero or great warrior

8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.

9 Who can tell if God will turn and re-

warrior died, the custom was, to make his horses fast for some time, and to cut off part of their hair: and we are told by the historians, that the people inhabiting the Canaries and Peru, in times of great drought, shut up their sheep and goats, without giving them any thing to eat, upon a presumption that their loud cries and bleating would reach heaven, and prevail with the Supreme Being to give them rain.

Ver. 8. Let man and beast be covered with sackcloth] The covering of horses and mules with sackcloth adds to the solemnity of a funeral. In like manner, the mournful garb of the Ninevites was an affecting circumstance in this public sorrow and humiliation. See Houbigant.

Ver. 9. And repent] And revoke his sentence. Houbigant. And so in the next verse, God revoked his sentence, and brought not upon them the evil which he was about to do unto them. See the note on Gen. vi. 6.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, No more disobedient to the heavenly vision; we now find Jonah ready to go; and God, though he might justly have dismissed him from his service, employs him again.

1. God sends him the second time to Nineveh, commanding him to preach what he had before ordered him; and herein he gave him a fresh token of his reconciliation and regard, and put him once more on the proof of his fidelity.

2. Jonah instantly proceeds on his journey, no longer deterred by any considerations: his afflictions had effectually wrought upon him, and his ready obedience shewed the truth of his repentance. Boldly, therefore, he delivered his message, going into the streets of that vast city, (which, by historians, is said to have been at least sixty miles in compass,) crying aloud, as God's herald, *Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown*, by some immediate stroke of divine vengeance; and most probably he informed them, that their sins were the cause of this terrible judgment denounced against them: the time short, yet it is infinite mercy that they have this space allotted them to repent: *one day's journey* he advanced with this awful warning, and waited the returning day to proceed farther through the city. *Note*; (1.) God's servants must apply themselves to his work according to his word, however dangerous or difficult the service may appear. (2.) God's messages to his prophets cannot alter; the impenitent sinner must perish, but those who return to him shall find mercy. (3.) They who carry God's warnings to a careless world must cry aloud, and, by their earnestness, shew how deeply they are affected with the dangers that they foretel. (4.) Great and wicked cities have need to tremble; an offended God can at his pleasure instantly swallow them up, or devour them as Sodom with fire from heaven. (5.) What sinner

pent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

10 ¶ And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.

would not tremble, if assured that forty days should bring him to the grave? and yet he sits unconcerned, though uncertain whether so many hours or minutes are allotted him.

2dly, One day's preaching effectually wrought upon the Ninevites, and rendered it unnecessary for the prophet to proceed any farther. Astonishing to tell! they repented at the preaching of Jonah; whilst Israel, under so many prophets, so long rising up and speaking to them, repented not. Therefore shall these Ninevites rise up in the judgment, and condemn them with all others, who, enjoying richer means of grace, continue hardened and impenitent under them.

1. They believed God. Such divine power accompanied the prophet's word, that conviction seized their consciences; and they instantly began to consider how they might avert their impending doom, and obtain mercy with this offended God. *Note*; It is a blessed symptom for good, when the sinner attends to God's word, and receives it as true, bowing in deep conviction under the charge laid against him.

2. A general fast is immediately proclaimed and observed. Tidings of this dreadful sentence were quickly carried to the palace; and, far from representing the prophet as a madman, or disturber of the peace, the nobles and people received him as an ambassador from God, and reported his message with great solemnity to their king; whereupon he rose from his throne, deeply affected with the prophet's word; and, laying aside the ensigns of royalty, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes; a noble example for his people's imitation, and a becoming expression of his own unfeigned humiliation. And all the people at his command, from the greatest to the least, copied after their royal master, and lay in sackcloth, deprecating that vengeance which all had provoked, and which was ready to consume them together. According to the decree of the king and his nobles, a fast is kept most strict and solemn; nor man nor beast may taste ought, not so much as water; but, covered with sackcloth, they are enjoined to cry mightily to God; even the beasts for lack of food would lift up their inarticulate voices: and men, women, and children, must unite in their prayers for mercy, if yet mercy might be found. Nor are they merely to make profession of penitence, but must instantly amend their lives; without which their prayers would be but hypocrisy; let them turn every one from his evil way, whatever his peculiar sin has been, and especially from the violence that is in their hands, fraud and oppression being their reigning iniquities. And when this is done, *Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?* The wrath was great, their provocations aggravated, their judgment just; but God is not

C H A P. IV.

Jonah, repining at God's mercy, is reproved by the type of a gourd.

[Before Christ 862.]

BUT it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.

2 And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, *was* not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou *art* a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

3 Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for *it is* better for me to die than to live.

4 ¶ Then said the LORD, Dost thou well to be angry?

5 So Jonah went out of the city, and sat

on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.

6 And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made *it* to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.

7 But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.

8 And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, *It is* better for me to die than to live.

9 And God said to Jonah, Dost thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, *even* unto death.

not inexorable; there is yet hope; and that encourages and hastens their repentance. *Note*: (1.) The higher our station is, the more exemplary should be our conduct. (2.) The way not to break under the sword of God's judgments, is to bow under the rod of his admonitions. (3.) Fervent prayer is mightily effectual; as long as a sinner is stirred up to cry to God, there is yet hope. (4.) In times of national distress, all must unite to deprecate the wrath which is threatened. (5.) They who fast for sin, must turn from the practice and love of it; else the mere afflicting of the body availeth not. (6.) The great encouragement to the sinner to turn to God is, that there is not only a peradventure of mercy to the truly penitent, but an assurance of it confirmed by the unchangeable oath of the God who cannot lie.

3. *God saw their works*, and heard their prayers; he observed their faith in his word, and the change wrought among them; he compassionated their distress, he reversed his threatenings, and extended to them the mercy which they so earnestly besought. He delighteth not in the death of any sinner; it is only by their own wilful impenitence that they bring down his wrath upon them.

C H A P. IV.

Ver. 1. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly] Seeing that what he had foretold against the Ninevites did not happen, Jonah was afraid, lest he should pass for a false prophet and a deceiver, his ministry be despised, and his person exposed to the violence of the Ninevites. He was therefore very peevish and impatient, and he vents his complaints in the following verse. There is certainly no reason to be solicitous about the justification of Jonah. It affects not the goodness of God, or the truth of Scripture, that imperfect characters are employed to communicate the divine commands.

Ver. 3. Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee] "I cannot survive the confusion of seeing my predictions vain, and to no effect: I cannot bear to live under the imputation of being a false prophet."

Ver. 4. Dost thou well to be angry?] *Hast thou a sufficient cause to be angry?* God asks him, whether his reputation is of so great consequence, that for the defence of it many thousands of men who repented should perish. But the reputation of Jonah was really in no danger; for the Ninevites did not doubt that he was sent by God, because they believed God, and sufficiently understood the condition implied, that if they repented they should not be destroyed. See Houbigant. Taylor says, the words should be rendered, *Art thou very much grieved?* and so *ver. 9.* See *Heb. Eng. Concordance*, R. 748, 637.

Ver. 5—8. So Jonah went out, &c.] *Now Jonah had gone out—and he sat, &c.* The author of the *Observations* asks upon this difficult passage, Did Jonah make himself a booth of boughs, in which to wait the event of his prophesy; and did the gourd come up in one single night afterward?—So our version supposes, and this is also Lowth's opinion. But had this really been the case, one cannot easily conjecture why the coming up of the gourd should have given him such an exquisite pleasure, or its destruction so much pain, when he had his *booth* to shelter him, which he had before thought very sufficient. By the description given of this country by Thevenot, who travelled in it, it should seem, that the lands on the Mesopotamian side of the Tigris, opposite to where Nineveh stood, are *low*; for they are cultivated and watered by means of little ditches, into which the water is poured out of the river; consequently it might be, and probably was, for the sake of the view he might have of the city, that Jonah placed himself on the *east side* of Nineveh, rather than on the west in Mesopotamia, towards his own country; and not, as Lowth

10 Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night:

11 And should not I spare Nineveh, that

great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

Lowth imagines, the better to escape the pursuit of the Ninevites, in case they should follow him to take him. There is not the least ground to imagine that Jonah had any such jealousy. The side of Mesopotamia, says Thevenot, is well sowed; but the Curdistan shore barren and uncultivated. This made a shelter of more importance to Jonah, few or no trees, we may presume, growing in this barren place, under which Jonah might have placed himself on the withering of the gourd. This accounts for his uneasiness; but then it will not be easy to conjecture whence he could get *boughs* to make himself a *booth*. This, joined with the consideration that the word סככה *sukkah*, translated *booth*, sometimes signifies a *shelter*, in the preparing of which *no art is used*, as in Jer. xxv. 38. Job, xxxviii. 40. and that the words, the Lord prepared a gourd, may also signify, he had prepared one; might lead us to think that this gourd, which Jonah found in this desert place, was the *booth* under which he placed himself, and all that he had, making it his defence against the heat; the perishing of which, in course, must give him great pain; especially when we consider the intolerable heat of the country; which is such, that Thevenot informs us, he did not go to visit the reputed tomb of Jonah, on the east side of the Tigris, on that account, there being hardly a possibility of stirring abroad two hours after the sun is risen, till an hour after it is set, the walls being so hot, that half a foot from them the heat feels as if it proceeded from hot iron. Concerning the kind of plant, whose shade was so refreshing to Jonah, I do not take upon me to form any conjecture. And as to some of the abovementioned particulars, it is but right to acknowledge, that Rauwolff gives a very different account from Thevenot, if he be rightly translated; for in Mr. Ray's collection he is represented as saying, that they sow the greatest part of the corn there, on the eastern side of the Tigris, and that the Mesopotamian side is so sandy and dry, that you would think you were in the middle of the deserts of Arabia. Thevenot, however, is generally acknowledged to have been an accurate observer; and his account, from a view of the above remarks, seems to throw light on the history of Jonah, and may, on that account, be believed to be a just one. See *Observations*, p. 86. To these remarks we may just add, that though the Hebrew word קיקיון *kikion*, is rendered by many versions a *gourd*, yet it seems properly to mean the *ricinus*, or *palma-christi*. It is described by St. Jerome as a kind of shrub, having broad leaves like the vine, affording a very thick shade, and supported by its own stem. It grows, says he, very commonly in Palestine, and chiefly in sandy places; and if one throws the seed upon the ground, it thrives wonderfully fast, and, within a few days after the plant appears, one sees a little tree. There can be no doubt, however, that *this* was miraculously raised and prepared for Jonah, as well as the *great fish*; for the same word is made use of upon both occasions. See chap. i. 17. The reader will find in

Scheuchzer, tom. vii. p. 466. a curious plate and account of the *ricinus*.

Ver. 10. *Thou hast had pity on the gourd*] God confutes the impatient grief of Jonah by a similitude. "You acquiesced in that plant, which afforded you a shade; I acquiesce in the repentance of the Ninevites. Therefore you ought not to grieve because I spare them, unless you prefer your own advantage and reputation to my glory and will." That Jonah is an allegorical person, our blessed Saviour does not suffer us to doubt; who, when he taught that Jonah was a type of his resurrection, shewed at the same time, when those things would have their completion which were meant by the allegory: for as by the miracles which happened in the mission of Jonah, the miracles of the rising church were presignified; so in the disposition of Jonah was pointed out the future disposition of the Jews, who would seek their own glory, and prefer it to the salvation of the Gentiles; who would glow with envy against the Gentiles, though their salvation or Saviour was to spring from the Jews themselves; whom God would not yet utterly desert as a nation, though separating themselves from those converted to him; as he deserted not Jonah, separating himself from the city of Nineveh; but yet whose envy God would not regard, when they would have him indulge and spare their antiquated law, as a dry and withered stem, because he will not forsake the multitude of the Gentiles returning to him, that the Jews themselves may at length become imitators of the Gentiles. By this allegory, which derived its authority from our Saviour, the extraordinary miracles related in this book will be sufficiently explained. It may not be improper to add, that possibly God might design this call to the Ninevites, as a pledge and assurance of his future admission of the people of all nations into the privileges of the Christian covenant. This certainly he might have under his immediate view, to shew the disparity between his nominal people and heathens; and upon the comparison of their several behaviours, to shame them for living unreclaimed, under the constant preaching of his prophets for so many years; when a people, whom they despised, as being strangers to the covenant of the promise, had by the mighty power of his word, been converted or awakened to repentance in the space of three days. See Houbigant, and Calmet.

Ver. 11. *Should not I spare Nineveh, &c.*] It is generally calculated, that the young children of any place are a fifth part of the inhabitants; and, if we admit of that calculation, the whole number of inhabitants in Nineveh amounted to above 600,000; which number will appear by no means incredible, if we consider the dimensions of the city, as given chap. iii. 3. So large a city might easily contain such a number of inhabitants, and many more; and at the same time there might be, as there are in most of the great cities in the East, large vacant spaces for gardens or pastures;

tures: so that there might be, as the sacred text asserts there was, *also much cattle*. It has been observed, that the book of Jonah ends as abruptly as it begins. It begins with a conjunction copulative, *And the word came unto Jonah*, וַיָּבֵי דְבַר וַיָּבֵי דְבַר *vaihei debar*, &c. which has made some commentators think, that it was but an appendix to some of his other writings: and it ends without giving us any manner of account, either of what became of the Ninevites, or of Jonah himself, after this expedition. It is likely, indeed, from the compassionate expressions which God makes use of towards the Ninevites, that for this time he reversed their doom; and it is not improbable that Jonah, when he had executed his commission, and been satisfied by God concerning his merciful procedure, returned into Judæa. We may presume, however, that the repentance of the Ninevites was of no long continuance; for, not many years after this, we find the prophet Nahum foretelling the total destruction of that city. See Calmet and Bishop Newton.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Never was perverseness more strange and unaccountable than here appears in this angry prophet.

1. He is exceedingly displeas'd at the repentance of the Ninevites, and the mercy extended to them, which one should have thought would have been the very joy of his heart. Perhaps he had imbibed the common Jewish prejudice against the heathen, and was unwilling that the crumbs of mercy should be cast to these dogs. Probably also he esteem'd this a deep reflection upon Israel, that heathens should repent so readily, and they continue obdurate. But what seems most to have touch'd him was his own reputation, lest he should be counted a false prophet. So apt are we to be selfish, and more concerned about the vain world's opinion, than about God's glory, and the good of men's souls.

2. He dares expostulate with God on the subject. It is said that he pray'd; but very unlike was this prayer from what he had so lately offer'd up to God. He begins with justifying himself to God for his flight to Tarshish, insolently insinuating that he was then in the right, having foreseen that this would be the consequence, because, as he suggests, he knew God's gracious character, and his readiness to receive and pardon returning sinners: a most amazing cause indeed for his displeasure! So ready are passionate people to suggest the most absurd reasons to justify their anger. And now in a passion he is tired of life, and wants God instantly to dispatch him, as if it was *better for him to die than to live*, and bear the reproach of a false prophet: a temper, indeed, very unfit for a dying man: but those who are blinded by their passions are destitute of reflection, and usually deaf to advice.

3. God justly rebukes him for his impatience and causeless perverseness. *Doest thou well to be angry?* what a mild rebuke for so great a provocation! If God be thus gentle, much more ought we to be so, and use that soft answer which turneth away wrath: or *is doing good displeasing to thee?* which should have been his delight. Surely never was greater forbearance; instead of striking him dead in judgment, as he deserved, the Lord kindly seeks to soften his resentment, and bring him to a better mind. What miserable, eternally miserable souls had many been, if God had given them their wishes, and sent that death which they impatiently invoked!

VOL. IV.

2dly, The beginning of strife is usually like the letting out of water; passion, having once taken the reins, goes from evil to worse.

1. Jonah retires in sullen silence, and waits without the city, to see what would become of it, having made for himself a booth with boughs of trees, to shelter him from the sun and rain. (See the Notes.) Probably he thought that if the greater judgments were removed, some lesser ones might be inflicted, and save his credit as a prophet; or he might presume that the repentance of the Ninevites would be of no long continuance, and then their ruin would return upon them.

2. Though in his present spirit he little deserved any favour from God, yet He, who is good to the evil and unthankful, thought upon him in his incommodious habitation, and caus'd a gourd, or, as others interpret it, a tree called the *ricinus*, or *palma-christi*, to spring up suddenly, and spread its shadow over him, *to deliver him from his grief*: probably the heat of the sun was very troublesome, and added to his other vexations. *Note*: (1.) They who vex themselves with imaginary ills, are often suffer'd to feel real misery. (2.) Though we are often sroward children, God is a tender father, and pities us even when we deserve punishment.

3. *Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd; he rejoic'd with a great joy*, as the words may be rendered; excessive in his gladness, as he had been in his anger. So easily do hot and hasty spirits run to extremes; and they who vex themselves about the loss of worldly trifles are usually as easily and as much elated with their gain.

4. God smote the gourd by a worm that he had prepar'd next morning, and left Jonah as much expos'd as ever; and, to make him feel more sensibly the loss, he sent a vehement east-wind, which with the hot sun-beams beat upon him; so that he was quite overpowered, and ready to die with the heat, from which he had no shelter. So quickly fading are all our earthly comforts, when God pleases to send a worm to our gourd; and when we are most happy in them, perhaps even then the instruments are at work to destroy them. In all sublunary goods, therefore, we should rejoice as if we rejoic'd not, that we may be ready to bless God when he takes away, as well as when he gives.

5. Jonah relapses into his former fretfulness, and, with impatient discontent at the loss of the gourd, again withes for death, as a deliverance from his misery. Thus inordinate affection lays a foundation for inordinate affliction.

6. God expostulates with him on his sin and folly. *Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?* *Note*: It becomes us in all our losses and crosses to check our inordinate discontent and anger, and ask, *Do I well to be angry?* so long, so often, on such frivolous occasions? One moment's reflection should shame and silence us.

7. Far from standing abashed at this reproof, he daringly vindicates his perverseness: *I do well to be angry even unto death*. Thus do ungovern'd passions bear down reason and conscience; and, deaf to conviction, men vindicate the most glaring absurdity and guilt. Nay, self-murderers, many fret themselves into diseases of body, as well as bring sin upon their souls, and will indulge their fretfulness and rage, though death be the consequence.

8. God, for his conviction, applies to him the case of this

4 C

this

this gourd, about which he so vexed himself. If he was so concerned about a poor shrub, the growth of a night, or the creature of a day, which he had used no pains to plant or water; with how much more pity might God well regard the vast city of Nineveh, where, besides the other inhabitants, were more than sixscore thousand infants, unable to distinguish good from evil, besides *much cattle*. The animal life was far preferable to the vegetable, and much more immortal souls to both; and here were

thousands, and such as never by actual transgression had offended—arguments which should for ever silence his discontent, and lead him to adore the transcendant mercy and righteousness of God. We may reasonably hope that the prophet was convinced, and humbled to the dust; and that he left us this faithful record of his sin and folly, that we might be warned against the like perverseness, or be encouraged to repent of it, and find mercy.

THE BOOK
OF THE
PROPHET MICAH.

MICAH the Morasthite, or of Moresa, a village near the city Eleutheropolis, in the southern part of Judah, prophesied under Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, for about fifty years. He appeared almost at the same time with Isaiab, and seems to have borrowed some expressions from him. Compare ch. iv. 1. with Isai. ii. 2. Bishop Lowth says, that his style is for the most part concise, comprehensive, and nervous; sometimes very nearly approaching to the obscurity of Hosea, but in many places sublime and animated, and extremely poetical. See his 21st Prelection, and Calmet.

C H A P. I.

Micah sheweth the wrath of God against Jacob for idolatry: he exhorteth to mourning.

[Before Christ 750.]

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

2 ¶ Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is: and let the Lord GOD be witness against you, the LORD from his holy temple.

3 For, behold, the LORD cometh forth out

of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth.

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

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

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

C H A P. I.

Ver. 2. Let the Lord God be witness, &c.] "I call the Almighty to witness, that I have forewarned you of the judgments hanging over your heads, and which will inevitably fall upon you, unless you speedily repent; and the Almighty himself will become a witness against you, and convince you of your sins, in such a manner, that you shall not be able to deny the charge." This sublime and elevated beginning indicates the importance of what he was about to say, and the lively impression which was made upon him by the sins of Israel, and the misfortunes about to fall upon them.

Ver. 3. For, behold, the Lord cometh, &c.] He pictures

out to us the Lord as a mighty conqueror, marching forth from his royal palace to reduce his enemies. The prophet in this whole description manifestly alludes to God's descent on mount Sinai. See Exod. xix. 16—18. Deut. iv. 11, 12. xxxii. 13. Pl. xviii. 8, &c.

Ver. 4. The valleys shall be cleft] Shall be dissolved like water, &c. Houbigant.

Ver. 5. What is the transgression of Jacob? Who [makes] transgression in Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And who the high-places of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem? But Houbigant prefers the translation of the LXX, and reads the latter words, What is the sin of Judah? by which means the two clauses aptly correspond to each other. The

the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof.

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

8 Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked: I will make a wailing like the dragons, and mourning as the owls.

9 For her wound *is* incurable; for it is come unto Judah; he is come unto the gate of my people, *even* to Jerusalem.

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

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

12 For the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good: but evil came down from the LORD unto the gate of Jerusalem.

13 O thou inhabitant of Lachish, bind the chariot to the swift beast: she *is* the beginning of the sin to the daughter of Zion: for the transgressions of Israel were found in thee.

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

15 Yet will I bring an heir unto thee, O

transgression, and sin, mean, the cause of sin and transgression, which Samaria and Jerusalem gave, as the whole nation followed their ill example.

Ver. 7. And all the hires thereof.] The love-presents, &c. The meaning is, "As your temples have been enriched with the presents offered by these shameless idol worshippers, so their riches shall return into the hands of the Assyrians, who shall make the like use of them in the temples of their gods."

Ver. 8. I will wail and howl.] "I will sympathize with my countrymen in their calamities; I will dress myself in the habit of mourning, and, like those who bewail the dead, go without my upper garment; in order to denote the naked condition to which the ten tribes shall be reduced by their enemies." Instead of dragons and owls, some read jackalls and ostriches; and a modern traveller assures us, that he has often heard the ostriches groan, as if they were in the greatest agonies; which is beautifully alluded to in this passage. See Dr. Shaw's Travels, p. 455.

Ver. 9. For her wound is incurable.] "The desolation of the ten tribes cannot be prevented, because they persist in their impieties; therefore no relief can be applied: it must terminate in their destruction. At the same time, one aggravating circumstance attends it, as being the forerunner of those evils which will come upon Jerusalem, whose gates Sennacherib will attempt to force, in order to make himself master of that city, and the whole kingdom of Judah." See Calmet.

*Ver. 10. In the house of Aphrah roll, &c.] Roll thyself in dust, in the very house of Aphrah, or dust. The word עפרה *aphrah*, has here a double sense; for it denotes the city of Aphrah, or Aphron, in the tribe of Judah, which Sennacherib was about to lay waste, for this and what follows respect the kingdom of Judah; and it explains what immediately precedes in the ninth verse, that the stroke was come even to the gate of Jerusalem, the neighbouring cities being laid waste by Sennacherib. See Houbigant.*

*Ver. 11. Pass ye away, &c.] Take care thou that inhabitest Saphir [a city in the tribe of Judah] to pass away naked and in disgrace. The inhabitants of Zaanan [another city in the tribe of Judah] shall not go forth to the mourning: Beth-ezel shall be taken away from you, while itself shall stand. By Beth-ezel is meant Jerusalem, to which Ezel was near, as appears from Zech. xiv. 5. But there is a twofold meaning given to the word עזל *Ezel*, which denotes separation, the prophet signifying that no aid could be expected from Jerusalem, because Jerusalem should fear for itself, and because the Syrian army should separate it from the city of Saphir, which is here addressed. The meaning of the last clause is, that though Jerusalem itself should stand or continue, yet no assistance should be obtained from it. See Houbigant.*

Ver. 12. For the inhabitant of Maroth waited, &c.] For she who dwelleth in Maroth is sick even to death; because evil came down, &c. See 2 Kings, xx. 1. A reason is here given why Beth-ezel, or Jerusalem, could not assist Saphir; because she herself was sick, and about to perish, unless God should deliver her by miracle, as he did, by destroying the Assyrian army. Jerusalem is called the inhabitant of Maroth, or of rebellion, by a similar use of words with that in the preceding verse; Jerusalem is therefore sick unto death, because the Lord hath brought the calamity even to her gate. See Houbigant. In the next verse the prophet foretels the siege of the city of Lachish. The first clause should be rendered, O thou inhabitant of Lachish, the chariot is bound to the horses: thou art the beginning, &c.

Ver. 14. Therefore shalt thou give presents.] Therefore shalt thou send presents against Moreshah to Gath the house of a lie, that thou mayest deceive the kings of Israel. Lachish and Moreshah were two cities in the tribe of Judah. The sacred history is silent why Lachish, when it was besieged, should send gifts to Gath. Perhaps Lachish implored the help of Gath, and promised help to the people of Gath in return, when delivered from the siege, to assist them in the taking of Moreshah from the kings of Israel or of Judah. There-

inhabitant of Mareſhah: he ſhall come unto Adullam the glory of Iſrael.

16 Make thee bald, and poll thee for thy

delicate children; enlarge thy baldneſs as the eagle; for they are gone into captivity from thee.

fore it is added, *to deceive the kings of Iſrael.* See Houbigant.

Ver. 15. *Yet will I bring an heir unto thee] Till I ſhall ſend unto thee that heir, who inhabiteth Mareſhah; till the glory of Iſrael ſhall come even to Adullam:* that is to ſay, "Till I ſhall ſend thoſe citizens of Mareſhah, whom thou wouldſt ſell to the people of Gath, to poſſeſs thy walls, after the army of the Aſſyrians ſhall be diſperſed, and after the glory of Iſrael ſhall come even to Adullam; or, ſhall extend its boundaries to Adullam;" a city in the ſouthern part of the tribe of Judah towards the Dead Sea. This interpretation is favoured by what follows; in which it is foretold, that the inhabitants of Lachiſh ſhall be carried into captivity. See Houbigant. It muſt be acknowledged that there is great difficulty in the concluſion of this chapter.

REFLECTIONS.—Iſt, Micah, or Micaiah, the author of this prophecy, was a Moraſthite, ſo named from the place of his nativity. He lived under the beſt and worſt of Judah's princes, and in all times of proſperity or adverſity faithfully declared the word which God gave him concerning Samaria and Jeruſalem, the capitals of the two kingdoms, the judgments which were ready to light upon them being the great burden of this prophecy.

1. A ſolemn call is given to pay deep attention to the word about to be delivered. *Hear, all ye people of Judah and Iſrael; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is;* if the former reſuſe to liſten, the very inanimate earth, trembling before the Lord, ſhall condemn their inſenſibility and hardneſs of heart: *and let the Lord God be witneſs againſt you,* if ye diſregard or deſpiſe theſe warnings, that I have faithfully delivered my meſſage, and that your blood is on your own heads; even *the Lord from his holy temple* in heaven, whence he beholds the inhabitants of the world, and ſends down thence his judgments on thoſe who are diſobedient to his word. *Note;* They who turn a deaf ear to the admonitions of God's miniſters, ſhall ſhortly be terribly convinced by experience of the threatenings which they would not believe.

2. The deſolating judgments of God are foretold, which were ready to overtake them. The Lord clothed with vengeance deſcends to deſtroy them: under his feet their ſtrongeſt fortreſſes are trod into the duſt, and the high places of their idols demolished. Their princes and great men, with all their lofty looks, are brought low, and *the valleys cleſt,* the loweſt of the people ſharing in the general calamity; and all unable to reſiſt his arm, as *wax melts before the fire,* or to bear up againſt his judgments, which as a torrent ſpread deſolation on every ſide. Samaria, the capital, ſhall then be laid in ruins, and be made as the furrows of the field, razed from the foundations, and ſcarceſy one ſtone left upon another; which, as Joſephus relates, was fully accompliſhed by Hircanus. *Note;* When God ariſes to judgment, no place can proteſt the guilty.

3. The cauſe of all their miſeries is their ſin; and if it be aſked, *What is the tranſgreſſion of Jacob?* the crime pe-

culiarly provoking; *Is it not Samaria?* the calf, and the idolatry there committed? See Hoſ. viii. 5. *And what are the high places of Judah? are they not Jeruſalem?* ſet up there with moſt impious effrontery againſt God's temple; yea, in the very courts of the ſanctuary an altar is reared to idols, 2 Kings, xvi. 10—18. *Note;* (1.) Sin is at the bottom of all ſuffering. (2.) Great cities and perſons, whoſe bad conduct and example ſpread the contagion of iniquity, ſhall be firſt and deepeſt in puniſhment.

4. The demolition of their idols, as well as themſelves, is threatened. They ſhall be broken in pieces by the Aſſyrians, and made utterly deſolate. Such as were not worthy carrying away for a ſpoil, ſhall be ſtripped of their ornaments, and left as naked logs; *and all the hires thereof ſhall be burnt with the fire;* their palaces and ſubſtance, which they eſteemed the gifts of their idols, and the hire of their idolatry: thus *what they gathered of the hire of an harlot, ſhall return to the hire of an harlot;* be given to their idolatrous enemies, who would regard the ſpoil as the reward ſent by their gods, and ſpend it in their ſervice. Or the ſenſe may be, that their wealth, which was as ill-gotten as the money earned by prostitution, would be, like it, under the curſe of God, and quickly conſumed. *Note;* The wages got by ſin will be ever earned with a curſe, and ſuch gain cannot proſper.

2dly, We have,

1. The prophet deeply lamenting the deſolations that he beheld approaching; *wailing as a dragon, and mourning as an owl,* becauſe *the wound is incurable,* the decree being gone forth againſt Iſrael, and their impenitence determinately obſtinate; and now the Aſſyrian army is at the very gate of Jeruſalem. *Note;* The holy prophets are themſelves deeply afflicted at the view of the threatenings which they are obliged to declare; and, ſo far from taking a delight in theſe ſad meſſages of woe, they weep over ſinners, while they warn them.

2. Other cities are called upon to join the prophet's mourning, but withal are admoniſhed *not to declare it at Gath,* nor weep ſo as to let the Philiftines ſee their grief, who would triumph with malicious pleaſure in their calamities. In ſilent grief they are commanded *to roll themſelves in the duſt, in the houſe of Aſhrab, the houſe of duſt,* all their cities being reduced to ruinous heaps. *The inhabitant of Saphir,* once, as the name imports, fair and beautiful, muſt now go *naked* into captivity, ſtripped of all their wealth and riches. *The inhabitant of Zaanan,* once numerous as a flock, *came not forth in the mourning of Beth-ezel,* to condole with her, or to help her, being too much engaged with their own miſeries; for *he ſhall receive of you his ſtanding;* the enemy encamping near them, and making them pay dear for the reſiſtance that their city made againſt him. *The inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good,* hoping at laſt to ſee ſome ſtop put to the ravages of the Aſſyrians; *but were quite in deſpair,* when *the evil came down from the Lord unto the gate of Jeruſalem,* and they beheld the enemy preparing to beſiege it. Lachiſh

C H A P. II.

Against oppression. A lamentation. A reproof of injustice and idolatry. A promise of restoration to Jacob.

[Before Christ 730.]

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

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

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

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

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

6 Prophecy ye not, *say they to them that* prophecy: they shall not prophecy to them, *that they shall not take shame.*

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

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

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

10 Arise ye, and depart; for this *is* not *your* rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy *you*, even with a fore destruction.

11 If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, *saying*, I will prophecy unto thee

chish is now bid to flee, or rather ironically her attempts to do so are derided, she being doomed with the rest to captivity. *She is the beginning of the sin to the daughter of Zion:* lying contiguous to Israel, this city became first infected; and the idolatry which the inhabitants had learned spread through the land of Judah; and therefore, as ringleaders in sin, they justly deserve severest judgment, the iniquities of the land lying chiefly at their door. In vain by presents would they court the Philistines, of *Mere-shub-gath* to assist them; though they promised them fair, they would fail them in the day of trial. *The houses of Achzib shall be a lie to the kings of Israel,* as the name Achzib signifies. *Marehah* also shall be a prey, God will bring *an heir* to her, one who should seize the country, as if it were his by inheritance. *He shall come unto Adullam the glory of Israel;* shall seize this fortress on which they trusted; or even to the glory of Israel, to Jerusalem itself. *Make thee bald, and pull thee for thy delicate children;* which seems addressed to the land in general: *enlarge thy baldness as the eagle;* shew every expressive sign of woe; *for they are gone into captivity from thee;* the prophet speaks of it as already done, because God had determined it.

C H A P. II.

Ver. 1. Woe to them that devise iniquity] “Woe to them whose thoughts are big with mischief; so that they contrive schemes of oppression and iniquity upon their beds; which, licentious in power, they put in practice as soon as they rise in the morning.” See Prov. iii. 29. and Lowth.

Ver. 2. They oppress] *They plunder.*

Ver. 3. For this time is evil] *For an evil time shall that be.*

Ver. 4. He hath changed the portion] *He hath alienated, or transferred the portion of my people. How hath he departed from me, to bring again him who divided our fields!* But Houbigant renders it, *The patrimony of my people is measured by line, and no one hath stirred himself to turn it [the line] from me; it hath divided our fields:* that is to say, “No one hath prohibited the enemy from dividing our fields among them.” The next verse confirms this interpretation: *Therefore there shall be no one, who, casting lots, shall extend a line for thee, in the congregation of the Lord.* The Assyrians had ravaged Israel and Judah before their final destruction. See 2 Kings, xv. 29. xviii. 13.

Ver. 6, 7. Prophecy ye not, &c.] *Prophecy ye not:—Yet they will prophecy. At least prophecy not these things: The boundaries of the kingdom shall not be removed, ver. 7. For thus saith the house of Jacob, Is the Spirit of the Lord? &c.* Houbigant.

Ver. 8. Ye pull off the robe, &c.] *Having taken away the garment, you plunder the robe also. They who travel securely are carried away as captives in war.* Houbigant.

Ver. 9. From their children, &c.] “Because, when ye plunder their houses, ye take away their children, and sell them to strangers and idolaters; and they are no longer esteemed my children, because they become the worshippers of false gods.” See 2 Chron. xxviii. 8.

Ver. 10. Arise ye, and depart] These words are addressed to the true worshippers of God, who dwelt in the kingdom of Israel, and who were part of *all that Jacob*, whom God, in the 12th verse, promises to assemble. That the truly pious

of wine and of strong drink ; he shall even be the prophet of this people.

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

multitude of men.

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

only can be here addressed, is plain from the words, *because it is polluted.* The next clause should be rendered, *Thou art defiled ; an inherent corruption is in thee.*

Ver. 11. *If a man, &c.] If a man, walking after the wind, or pursuing vanity and falsehood, do lie, saying, I will prophesy unto thee for wine and for strong drink, &c.*

Ver. 12. *As the flock, &c.] They shall make a great noise on account of the multitude of men, as the flock in the midst of the fold.* God is often styled the Shepherd of Israel ; and his care over his believing people is compared to that of a shepherd over his flock, when he gathers them into the fold, and defends them from beasts of prey. See Houbigant and Lowth.

Ver. 13. *The breaker is come up, &c.] He who shall open the way shall ascend before them : They shall come by troops, and pass through the gates. Their king before them shall lead the band : The Lord shall be at their head.* In these two last verses the times of the new covenant are foretold ; when he who is both the shepherd and the king of his sheep,—of all his faithful people,—shall open the way before them ; when they shall go into that rest mentioned, ver. 10. It is very usual with the prophets, after they have denounced the destruction of the Jewish republic, to foretel their grand and spiritual deliverance ; that the people might not think themselves intirely forsaken of God as a nation. See Houbigant and Calmet.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, It is true both of nations and individuals, that they would never have been sufferers, if they had not first been sinners.

1. The sins of this people are brought to light. With deep contrivance, even on their beds, they planned their wicked designs ; and having in the day cast their greedy eyes on some field or house which lay convenient for them, they devised how to dispossess the owner, and, like Ahab, seize the heritage : and, eager to put their schemes in execution, no sooner does the morning break, than they are in haste to be at their evil work ; and, having the power in their hands, stop at no oppression, fraud, or injustice, to accomplish their designs, careless about the miseries which they may entail upon the unhappy families of those who fall the victims of their covetousness. *Note ; (1.)* Where inordinate love of gain possesses the heart, the very feelings of humanity are often banished. *(2.)* The more design and deliberation there is in sin, the more exceeding sinful it becomes. *(3.)* They who abuse their power to oppression, will find a greater than they to espouse the cause of the injured.

2. God threatens them with condign punishment. They flattered themselves that they could as easily escape the curse as they had broken the commands of God, and

haughtily looked down on their inferiors, and despised the warnings of the prophets ; but God will devise an evil against them, the Assyrian invasion, from which they cannot remove their necks ; and in this time of evil, distress, and perplexity, the lofty looks of the proud shall be brought low ; for pride will surely sooner or later have a fall. To such misery would they be then reduced, that they would be a proverb in the mouth of every beholder ; insulted by their enemies and by their friends bitterly lamented ; the general cry will be, *We be utterly spoiled ;* their persons captives ; their substance plundered ; their land possessed by strangers ; their portion changed, and given into the hands of the heathen. *Turning away, he hath divided our fields ;* either God in anger hath turned from them, and given them up to the spoil ; or the Assyrian conqueror, before he retired, divided their land among others ; so that now they should neither have the country to divide, as in the days of Joshua, nor people to inhabit it, nor a congregation of the Lord, in which to cast the lot before him. *Note ; (1.)* What is got by fraud, will usually be no abiding possession. *(2.)* There is a righteous God, who will shortly deal with proud oppressors according to their deserts.

2dly, They who choose their own delusions, are justly given up to them. The sins and punishments of this people exactly correspond.

1. Their persecution of the prophets is punished by depriving them of these faithful ministers, and abandoning them to their own inventions. *Prophecy ye not, say they to them that prophecy ;* they could not bear their harsh admonitions, nor patiently hear the judgments which they denounced, and therefore enjoined them silence. Thus they who will not be reformed hate to be reproved, and still seek to silence the faithful ministers who will not suffer them to go on quietly in their iniquities, but denounce those terrors of the Lord which disturb their repose. Some read the words *Prophecy not,* as addressed to the true prophets ; but *prophecy ye,* the false prophets, who flattered them in their iniquities : such teachers they chose as with lies and falsehood lulled them asleep, promising them peace, though they added drunkenness to thirst, the companions or encouragers of their wickedness ; and though they abused their blessings so vilely, prophesying of wine and of strong drink, the best news in a drunkard's ears ; *he shall be the prophet of this people.* On such abominable conduct God expostulates with them, *O thou that art named the house of Jacob, glorying in their descent from this patriarch ; is the Spirit of the Lord straitened ?* will their prohibition stop God's Spirit ? and when he speaks, can the prophets forbear ? Or will they limit him to visions of peace, and restrain him from foretelling the judgments that they provoked ?

C H A P. III.

The cruelty of the princes. The falsehood of the prophets. The security of them both.

[Before Christ 710.]

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

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

voked? *Are these his doings?* does such conduct become the house of Jacob? or, is this like God's people? or, does God delight in vengeance? No: they forced him to the strange work. *Do not my words, says he, do good to him that walketh uprightly?* If they enjoy not the blessing, they have only themselves to blame, who, by their impotence, put good things from them. For these things, therefore, God gives them up to their own delusions, and bids his prophets be silent. *They shall not prophesy to them, that they shall not take shame;* either that the prophets may not expose themselves to the insults which they had met with; or that they should reprove the people no more, who, as they had chosen lying prophets as their sin, shall be curst with them as their plague; and a heavier one cannot light upon them. *Note;* (1.) They who are vile themselves, choose those for teachers who most resemble them, and from whom they least fear reproof. (2.) None hate God's word, but those who walk contrary thereto: the upright delight in it, and adore the justice of the wrath therein revealed, as well as the riches of the grace. (3.) Many are happy when their ministers who disturbed them are removed or silenced, not knowing the wrath and reprobacy which are herein contained.

2. Their oppression shall be punished with captivity. *Even of late my people is risen up as an enemy;* as when the Israelites fell upon their brethren, 2 Chron. xxviii. 6. or they grew more and more oppressive. *Ye pull off the robe with the garment;* stripping the poor quite naked, and this without the least provocation; *from them that pass by securely,* little suspecting such violence; *as men averse from war,* peaceable themselves, they thought to pass unmolested. Nay, to such a pitch of inhumanity they advanced, that they spared not helpless women and children, plundering their pleasant houses: and *from their defenceless children have ye taken away my glory for ever;* enslaving them, and selling them to the heathen; thus depriving them of all the blessings of God's worship, and robbing him of his glory. But God will give them according to their deeds: the oppressors shall in their turn be oppressed. *Arise ye, and depart, ye who are my true worshippers,* out of this polluted land: or, as others explain it, *Arise ye, and depart, prepare for captivity; for this is not your rest:* you flattered yourselves with an abiding mansion here, but God hath decreed the contrary. *Because it is polluted, it shall destroy you even with a sore destruction;* the land shall shake them out, as the Canaanites of old; and the Chaldean sword

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

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

5 ¶ Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that

shall spread dreadful ravages among them, the just punishment of their cruelty and oppression. *Note;* (1.) To oppress the fatherless and widows is peculiarly criminal, and God will surely be the avenger of their wrongs. (2.) This world is not our rest; we must not think of it here below: *it is polluted,* and every thing around us is ready to communicate defilement. We must *arise and depart,* weaned from it in affection, and passing through it as a pilgrim through a strange land, careful to avoid the pollutions that are in it, and hastening on to our only true rest, which is above with God in glory.

3dly, God still in judgment remembers mercy. The chapter closes with a gracious promise of the adored Messiah.

The Lord will assemble the scattered remnant of Israel returning penitently to him whom they had forsaken, and will unite them in one glorious fold, where they shall together rejoice aloud under their divine Shepherd's care; which was accomplished when, by the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, many penitent Jews were brought into his church, and rejoiced in his salvation; and will be more fully accomplished, when the sons of Jacob shall be gathered from their present dispersion and embrace the true Messiah. *The breaker is gone up before them,* Christ Jesus, who hath borne down all opposition from sin and Satan, and opened a way for the faithful to pass over, especially by his resurrection and ascension, leading their captivity captive: *they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it,* even all the faithful sons of God, who are made more than conquerors through his grace, and enabled triumphantly to pass through the gate of death: *and their king shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them;* Jesus the captain of their salvation leading the way, opening the kingdom of heaven to all believers, and bringing many sons unto glory, even all that faithful host which no man can number.

C H A P. III.

Ver. 3. And flay their skin from off them;] Who, when ye have flayed the skin from off them, and broken their bones, then throw their flesh as into a pot, or caldron. These are hyperbolical expressions, to set forth the covetousness and cruelty of the princes of Israel, who, like unnatural shepherds, acted the part of wolves toward their flocks.

Ver. 5. And cry, Peace;] "Who speak nothing but agreeable and friendly things, so long as any thing is

" given

putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him :

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

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

8 ¶ But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.

9 Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the

house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity.

10 They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity.

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

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

“ given them to satisfy their covetousness ; but who proclaim war, and become bitter enemies to those that do not put into their mouths what they demand.” See Calmet. Instead of *prepare war*, we may read *proclaim war*.

Ver. 6. *And the sun shall go down, &c.*] “ You shall be in confusion, and in grief, despised and ill-treated ; not able to open your mouth, when the people carried with you into captivity shall accuse you of the false and delusive counsels which you would have passed upon them as the oracles of God. Overtaken yourselves by dark days, and dismal calamities, as a just judgment for your frauds and impostures, you shall have no light or revelation from heaven ; *no answer from God ;*” ver. 7. See Calmet.

Ver. 8. *But truly I am full of power, &c.*] “ I speak with courage, fully assured that it is the spirit of God which animates me ; and, in consequence hereof, I have the honesty and courage to reprove the crying sins of the nations, though practised and encouraged by the greatest of men ; contrary to the base soothing and flatteries of the false prophets, for a little *wine* and *strong drink*.” See ver. 11. and chap. ii. 11.

Ver. 12. *Therefore shall Zion—be plowed as a field*] There is nothing that hinders us from referring this prophecy to the first destruction of Jerusalem ; for, though the foundations of the walls were left, yet a great number of houses within the city were overturned, as well by the Chaldeans as by the Jews themselves ; who possibly used the materials to repair the breaches made in the walls during the long siege that they underwent ; when there could be no wonder if many places were plowed as a field, for the purposes of corn, which before were gardens and houses. See 1 Macc. iv. 38. The prophecy, however, may have a farther respect to the total desolation of Jerusalem, when Terentius Rufus, by the order of Titus, plowed up the very foundations of it. See Houbigant and Calmet.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The higher the station, or the more sacred the office, the more dangerously influential
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will be an ill example, and the more aggravated is every transgression. The princes and priests, who should have been the support of religion, are chief in sin, and shall be chief in suffering.

1. The princes are arraigned and condemned. With great boldness the prophet charges their crimes upon their consciences, and bids them hear what the prince of the kings of the earth hath decreed concerning them. The duty of their station, as magistrates, required that they should be wise to know and impartial to administer justice : but the very reverse had their conduct been. *They hate the good*, the righteous man and his cause ; *and love the evil*, approving the wicked, and countenancing them ; or they hated goodness itself, and delighted in wickedness and oppression, like wild beasts tearing the flock of God's pasture, fleecing them to the very skin by their exactions and rapine ; yea, to the very marrow they devoured them, breaking their bones, and chopping them *as for the pot*. For which barbarity and rapaciousness God threatens to cast out their prayer in the day of distress, and turn a deaf ear to their cries, as they have done to the cries of the oppressed. And just will be the retaliation.

2. The false prophets are next convicted, and their doom is read. They caused the people to err by their lies, crying *Peace*, when God had said *There is no peace* : they *bite with their teeth* ; either gnash upon the true prophets for their reproofs ; or, so long as the people fed them well, they flattered them in their sins : *and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him*, denounce God's judgments against him, or stir up his neighbours or the princes to persecute him. For which wickedness they shall be brought into the *night* of dark and dismal calamities, and be for ever silenced, experience giving the lie to their divinations ; or *because of divination* shall these evils come upon them ; all their prosperity shall be at an end, *their sun shall set*, and darkness and dismay surround them : *confounded* and *ashamed*, they shall no more dare open their lips ; for now it shall be evident to all, that they never had an *answer from God*, though they made use of his sacred name to preface their pretended revelations. Let those who usurp the office of

C H A P. IV.

The glory, peace, kingdom, and victory of the church.

[Before Christ 710.]

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

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

3 ¶ And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and

they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

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

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

6 ¶ In that day, saith the LORD, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted;

7 And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong

God's ministers without a divine call remember that the day is near when their sin and shame shall be made manifest to all.

2dly, In opposition to the character of the false prophets Micah declares,

1. Whence he received his commission, and how he discharged it. *The Spirit of the Lord* had called him, and furnished him with gifts and graces for the work of his ministry; therefore he could say, *truly I am full of power*: he speaks with confidence; for he knew that he said no more than the truth: *and of judgment and of might*; he feared neither the many nor the mighty; he delivered his message with dignity, as one having authority; with zeal for God's glory and the good of men's souls; and with judgment, discretion guiding his zeal; and his discernment was clear, both to distinguish truth from falsehood, and to know how to speak a word in season; therefore, being thus qualified for his ministry, he boldly declared to *Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin*, whether they would hear or whether they would forbear. *Note*; (1.) Those whom God calls into the ministry he qualifies for it. (2.) They who go to bear testimony against a sinful people, need much courage and fidelity to discharge their trust.

2. Being thus sent on God's errand, he, without respect of persons, delivers his message, and calls upon the heads of Jacob, the princes, priests, and prophets, who had been the ringleaders in sin, to hear God's righteous judgments. The princes, as magistrates, abhorred justice, and perverted the law to oppression; the highest bribe with them ever carried the cause, and nothing could be transacted without a fee. They sucked the very blood of the poor, or murdered the innocent to seize their goods, and then built them stately palaces at Jerusalem, or ornamented the temple with the wages of their iniquity. The priests, equally mercenary, and lovers of filthy lucre, *taught for hire*, not for God's glory, or the good of men's souls; and, if they were well paid, they readily suited their doc-

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trine to the palate of their hearers. The prophets also *divined for money*; they who inquired of them were sure to hear good news, if they paid them well: and yet, notwithstanding these abominations, *They lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us?* Because they had the temple and the outward ordinances, they flattered themselves that they had God's favour and presence among them; and therefore *no evil can come upon us*; as if their external privileges would be their protection: but they were fatally deceived; as all will be, who rest on the form while they deny the power of godliness. *Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, &c.* Their sins had provoked God to send utter destruction on the temple and city in which they placed their confidence; not a stone shall be left on another, but the whole be reduced to a ruinous heap; which was in great measure done by the Chaldeans, and most literally fulfilled by the Romans. *Note*; (1.) Ministers must know no respect of persons when they speak in God's name, but rebuke the greatest with all authority. (2.) Nothing is so opposite to the character of Christ's ambassadors, as that of serving for hire, and loving *filthy lucre*. (3.) Outward privileges abused aggravate the guilt and hasten the ruin of sinners, while they are placing their confidence in them. (4.) The sins of the great bring down those judgments which overwhelm their own country with desolation.

C H A P. IV.

Ver. 1. But in the last days, &c.] See what has been said upon this subject on Isai. ii. 2, &c.

Ver. 5. And we will walk, &c.] This passage respects the Jews alone, and the times which followed the captivity; when the Jews continued attached to their God, while the Gentile world remained in the darkness of idolatry. The two next verses, primarily respecting the return from the captivity, have, as is usual with the prophets, a still farther view to the Gospel times, and especially to the last call

nation: and the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever.

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

9 Now why dost thou cry out aloud? is there no king in thee? is thy counsellor perished? for pangs have taken thee as a woman in travail.

10 Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou

shalt go even to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered; there the LORD shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies.

11 ¶ Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion.

12 But they know not the thoughts of the LORD, neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor.

13 Arise, and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass: and thou shalt beat in pieces many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the LORD, and their substance unto the LORD of the whole earth.

call of the Jews, the fulness of the Gentiles, and the establishment of Christ's millennial reign on earth.

Ver. 8. And thou, O tower, &c.] And thou, O tower of Eder, O fortress of the daughter of Zion, thy time shall come: and the former dominion shall return, even the kingdom, to the daughter of Jerusalem. See Vitranga on Isai. xxxii. 14. The prophet, says Houbigant, changes the name of Jerusalem, and uses a topographic name, tower of the flock; which tower, perhaps, was near the sheep-pool;—and the name of cliff; חֲדָר אֶפֶס, to signify that he now prophesies of a future state, and that temporal, of the city of Jerusalem itself; for, after he had foretold that the new law should take its beginning from Jerusalem; here, and to the end of the chapter, he foretels what changes of affairs should happen in the republic and kingdom of the Jews, till the future light of the Gospel should break forth. He had said at the end of the foregoing chapter, that Jerusalem should be plowed as a field; he now adds, resuming the order of time, that the ancient kingdom should return to the daughter of Jerusalem. Instead of, Unto thee shall it come, Houbigant reads, Thou shalt be clothed with thy ornament; for he observes, that unto thee shall it come, has no meaning; neither is there in the Hebrew any nominative case to the verb shall come.

Ver. 9. Now why dost thou cry, &c.] As much as to say, "What cause is there thus to cry and lament like a woman in labour, when it is so certainly promised thee that thy ancient kingdom shall again return? There is indeed cause for thee to lament, on the view of thy Babylonish captivity; for, till after that period, thou shalt have no temporal deliverer: but that past, the Lord will gather thee as the sheaves into the floor;" ver. 12. Instead of, Is thy counsellor perished, &c. we may read Is thy counsellor lost, that pangs, &c.?

Ver. 11. Let her be defiled] Thou art defiled, and our eye shall behold Sin as a spectacle; that is to say, of scorn.

Ver. 13. Arise, and thresh] The expression alludes to the manner of treading out the corn in the eastern countries; which was done by the feet of oxen. Instead of, And I will consecrate, &c. Houbigant reads, And thou shalt consecrate

their prey, &c. which was fulfilled by the Maccabees and their successors.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, After the desolations before described, never could a more welcome *But* come in, than begins the present chapter, where, according to the riches of God's grace, the former melancholy scene changes, and the Gospel-church, a brighter phoenix, rises from the ashes of Zion.

1. The church of Christ shall be firmly established, and gloriously exalted. *In the last days, the days of the Messiah, it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, fixed on a basis immovable for the benefit of all the faithful; and conspicuous as a city set on a hill. And this had its primary accomplishment when Christ and his apostles first erected this glorious fabric, and shall more eminently be fulfilled when, in the latter day, the kingdoms of the world will become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ.*

2. Vast multitudes of converts shall flow unto it, numerous as the drops which mighty rivers pour into the ocean; and many nations shall come and say, *Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, encouraging each other eagerly to press into the church; and he, Christ the head of his church, will teach us of his ways, by his word and Spirit; and we will walk in his paths, supported by his grace, and strengthened to follow him; for the law shall go forth of Zion, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus; and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; the Gospel there began to be first preached, and thence the healing waters of the sanctuary have flowed into all lands, and through mercy particularly into our own. And they who have an enlightened mind will value the inestimable blessing.*

3. The power which will accompany the preaching of the Gospel in these last days, will change men's hearts, and bring them to mutual love and peace. *He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off, convincing the Gentiles of their sin, and the judgment of God*

C H A P. V.

The birth of Christ; his kingdom; his conquest.

[Before Christ 710.]

NOW gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege

against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.

2 But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, *yet* out of thee shall he come forth unto me

against it, and bringing them to repentance and faith; in consequence of which, *swords shall be turned into ploughshares*, all quarrels and animosities cease, the proud passionate spirits of men be made humble and peaceable, and wars be at an end; whilst each, sitting in comfort under his own vine and fig-tree, shall be quiet from fear of evil; which, so far as the Gospel now prevails, will be the spirit of every converted soul; and it shall universally be diffused in the last days, when this happy state of things shall more gloriously appear; *for the mouth of the Lord of Hosts hath spoken it*; and therefore, however unlikely it may seem, it shall be fulfilled.

4. There will then be wonderful constancy among Christians in their holy profession. *For all people will walk every one in the name of his god.* This is usually the case, Jer. ii. 11. or this will be the case till the Messiah shall convert them to himself. *And we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever*, with unshaken fidelity and unremitting ardour; such being even now the full purpose of every gracious soul.

5. Though the souls of poor penitent finners are often now like a poor flock before devouring wolves or roaring lions, worried and tempted, and will be more or less till these last and glorious days; God will then bind Satan; and he will superabundantly strengthen all his people, and they shall be all one fold under one shepherd. And this some commentators particularly refer to the Jews, who shall be recovered from their present dispersion at last, and, after all their afflictions, become a great and glorious people to the Lord.

6. *The Lord shall then reign in his church for ever and ever.* He has begun to set up his kingdom already in the world; but hereafter he will more eminently display his power and grace, when, the fulness of the Gentiles being come in, and Israel restored, *He shall reign in mount Zion and over his ancients gloriously.*

2dly, The words, *O tower of the flock, Migdal-eder*, are left by many untranslated, as the name of a place near Bethlehem, Gen. xxxv. 19—21. Others suppose them put for Jerusalem, the strong-hold of the daughter of Zion: whilst others, and with reason, conjecture this to be one of the titles of the Messiah, *the tower of his faithful flock, and the strong-hold of his church.* And,

1. It is here promised, that in him the kingdom of David, which was fallen, should revive in all its splendour, according to the *first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.* There the Gospel of the kingdom began to be preached; many Jews were admitted members of it; and the apostles, who were of the stock of Israel, were the chief persons in it: perhaps also particular respect may be had to Christ's coming to them at the time of their last conversion, when the kingdom of the Messiah shall most eminently come to them.

2. The temporal deliverances that God will work for his Israel, are the figure and earnest of the spiritual redemption which he has in store for them.

[1.] They are represented as in a state of great distress, crying aloud as a travailing woman in pangs; their king no more, *their counsellors perished*, cast out of their cities, and dwelling in the fields, led captive to Babylon, and serving their Chaldean masters.

[2.] God will deliver them thence. Cyrus is his appointed instrument, raised up to rescue them from the house of their prison.—The figure of that great Redeemer, who came to preach deliverance to captive souls from the bondage of corruption, and to bring them into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

[3.] When new troubles arise, new helpers shall be given them. The church militant may expect little rest here below till the latter day's glory arrive. *Now also*, after their restoration from Babylon, *many nations shall be gathered against thee*, as particularly was the case in the days of the Maccabees; *that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion*, pleased with the thoughts of her ruin, and hoping to behold it: *but they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they his counsel*, which were the very opposite to theirs; for, while they designed the destruction of Zion, he intends to overrule their assembling to their own confusion and perdition: *for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor*, ripe for ruin; and then the daughter of Zion shall be strengthened to *arise and thresh*, pushing her enemies as with horns of iron, treading them under foot as with hoofs of brass, and beating them in pieces. *And I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth.* The spoil, which was gotten by the Lord's power, ought justly to be devoted to his honour and service. All our gains are from him, and should be employed for him.

This prophecy, some suppose, was literally accomplished in the victories of the Maccabees over Antiochus and the neighbouring nations. Whilst others conceive it to refer to the spiritual conquests of the Redeemer. And some imagine that it relates to the destruction of the anti-christian powers in the latter days, when the kingdom of Jesus shall be triumphantly set up, and all his foes be made his footstool.

C H A P. V.

Ver. 1. Now gather thyself in troops, &c.] But thou shalt be made desolate, O desolating daughter: thou shalt be surrounded by a siege; because they have smitten the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek. This verse should be the last of the preceding chapter, and not the first of this; for the last fate of the Jews is here terminated; who, in the re-establishment of their kingdom, having taken much spoil from the neighbouring people, shall at length perish, when they

that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

3 Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his bre-

they have struck Jesus Christ, the judge of Israel, on the cheek. See Houbigant.

Ver. 2. But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah] Ephratah was another name for Beth-lehem in the tribe of Judah, and both names are joined together to distinguish it from another Beth-lehem in the tribe of Zebulun. In the gospel by St. Matthew it is said, *Thou, Beth-lehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least.* In the Hebrew it is, *though thou art the least, or, literally, little to be; צעיר להיות זעיר לביצח.* The sense in both is clear and consistent, says Dr. Sharpe; for this city, though far from being the most considerable in extent of all those belonging to the princes of Judah, is nevertheless, on account of the governor or ruler who was to come out of it, *not the least among the thousands of Judah.* The learned Pococke, on this passage, has shewn, that the original word may signify either *great or little.* But this is a mode of interpretation not very admissible. If the passage be read, as in the translation from the Syriac in the English Polyglot, with an interrogation, it will have the force of a negative, and then may well be rendered, as in the Arabic and Persian versions, and in the Gospel by St. Matthew; but, if without any interrogation, it will be as it is in the other versions from the Hebrew. Hence it is evident, that the Gospel may be reconciled with the present copies of the Hebrew Bible, without any alteration of the text, which, in matter of evidence, is not to be admitted. It may be proper, however, to observe, that in the original there is neither an affirmative nor a negative particle: literally, the words are, as we before remarked, *a little one to be.* Now if there be any necessity for adding anything to clear up the sense, surely an inspired apostle, quoting the decision of the whole Jewish Sanhedrin, should, above all others, be followed; and after him we might well render the passage, *Thou, Beth-lehem,—art not a very little one, to be in the thousands of Judah; for, or since out of thee shall come forth, &c.* And the context seems to require this, assigning the birth of this ruler in Beth-lehem as a reason why it was not a little one in reality, though such in esteem. It is added, *among the thousands;* which St. Matthew reads, *among the princes of Judah;* and for this reason, every tribe was divided into so many thousand men, as shires in England are into hundreds; over which presided an אלוף *aluf,—leader, or prince, to command them in battle.* Hence the same word came to signify at once a *thousand* and *the leader* of a thousand. Beth-lehem was too small in people to be reckoned as one of these *thousands,* or to be numbered singly in the army against the enemy; but is promised the advantage over them, in giving birth to that ruler in Israel, who is superior to all the princes of the thousands. The Hebrew word יצא *iesse,* rendered *come forth,* signifies also *to be born;* and so this prophecy, as the Scribes and Pharisees understood it, plainly points to Beth-lehem as the place where the ruler or king of Israel was to be born, after the Babylonish captivity was over; and thus it is impossible to accommodate it to any other ruler than the Messiah.

But if this circumstance can be accommodated to no other than him, much less can that which follows: *Whose goings-forth have been of old, from everlasting;* to signify the perfection and excellency of the generation of the person here foretold. The prophet here describes him who, he says, should come out of Beth-lehem, and be ruler in Israel, by another more eminent coming or going forth than that from Beth-lehem, even before Beth-lehem had an existence,—from all eternity; which is so signal a description of the divine generation before all time, or of that going-forth from everlasting of Christ the eternal Son of God, God of the substance of the Father, begotten before all worlds, and afterwards in time (according to what is said, that he should come forth out of Beth-lehem) made man of the substance of his mother, and born in the world,—that this prophecy belongs only to him, and could never be verified of any other. The word וצאיתו *umot-footbaiv,* for *goings-forth,* that is to say, *birth,* is plural. It is a common Hebraism to denote the eminency or continuation of a thing or action by the plural number. From these circumstances in the text, the Chaldee paraphrast of the Jews inserts the name of the *Messiah* before *ruler in Israel,* to shew of whom the prophet is to be understood; and to signify that what follows relates also to the Messiah. He then who is the subject of this prophecy is that divine Person, who so often *went forth* in the name of the Lord; who conversed with Abraham and Moses, manifesting by miracles and wonders his Godhead and supreme power: *who was from everlasting;* and who, at last, was made manifest in the flesh, and came forth from Beth-lehem, the king of the Jews. Of no other person whatever can it be said, that he appeared, or *came forth* from the beginning; *from the days of eternity,* as it is well rendered by the LXX: he who was afterwards, in some period of time subsequent to this oracle by Micah, to come forth out of Beth-lehem, as a prince or governor,—*unto me;* or, before God the Father. See Bishop Chandler's Defence, p. 124. Sharpe's Second Argument, p. 150. and Houbigant.

Ver. 3. Therefore will he give them up] Notwithstanding; he will give them up, until the time that she that beareth, &c. The Hebrew word נתת *itneim,* rendered *give up,* signifies properly, says Dr. Sharpe, *to give, as to continue or accomplish;* and the pronoun *them* is to be referred to the *goings-forth.* These proceedings, or *goings-forth as of old,* he was not to give up, or surrender, but to give, and continue, or accomplish, until he should be born of the virgin; *until she which travaileth hath brought forth.* Houbigant understands it in nearly the same sense. The Hebrew word נתת *ister,* rendered *remnant,* in the next clause of the verse, is used to signify *excellency,* Gen. xlix. 3; 4. and to *excel;* Job. iv. 21. Prov. xii. 26. xvii. 7. And that this is the sense of the word here seems evident; because another word is used for *remnant* in the 7th and 8th verses. The word ושב *ieshubun,* rendered *to return,* may without the *vau,* when differently pointed, signify *to dwell;* Pl. xxiii. 6. and is translated in that sense by the LXX. Isa.

Isa.

thren shall return unto the children of Israel.

4 ¶ And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.

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

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

our land, and when he treadeth within our borders.

7 And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the LORD, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.

8 ¶ And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people, as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver.

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

Isai. xxi. 12. According to these observations, the prophet may be understood as implying, "After his birth, then shall his *excellent* brethren,—and not the *remnant* of "his brethren,—*dwell* among the children of Israel." These *brethren* are the disciples and companions of the Lord, who are spoken of, Pf. cx. as eminent for worth and excellence.

Ver. 4. *He shall stand and feed*] Houbigant observes, that the Messiah is said to *stand*, or continue on earth, in contradistinction to his *goings-forth* from eternity. This great shepherd is said to *feed* or *rule*; (in the LXX is added, *his flock*) *in the majesty of his name, or, in the glorious name of Jehovah his God.* This is certainly that great Personage of whom God says, *My name is in him.* He is to feed his sheep *in the majesty of the name of God*; or, the glory of God is to be manifested by the great miracles that he is to perform, and the high office that he is to discharge, as the Shepherd, the Mediator, the Lord. It is added, *And they shall abide*; that is to say, his disciples and followers shall be established, in consequence of his mission and miracles; and now by their ministry shall be great unto the ends of the earth. This was accomplished by the swift and amazing progress which Christianity made in the world. Houbigant very judiciously joins the first clause of the next verse to the end of this; because, says he, those words conclude the prophecy concerning the coming of the Messiah, and the light of the Gospel brought by him, who is the *prince of peace.* See Isai. ix. 6.

Ver. 5, 6. *When the Assyrian shall come, &c.*] Instead of, *Shall we raise against him, &c.* in ver. 5. Houbigant reads, *Seven shepherds and eight princes of the people shall be raised against them*; ver. 6. *who shall feed upon the land of, &c.* *And the land of Nimrod with the edge thereof, and shall deliver us from the Assyrian, when, &c.* Micah now returns, says he, to the last times of the Jewish republic, which were spoken of at the end of the preceding chapter; and, after the ruin of the Assyrians, foretels the kingdom of the seven Magi in Persia, afterwards of the eight leaders, whereof Darius the son of Hystaspes was one; by whom the Jewish republic returned to its ancient splendour. If

we admit our interpretation, this deliverance must be referred to the goings-forth of the Word, which he was to accomplish before he was made flesh, and dwelt among us. Dr. Sharpe observes, "Since no person whatever was raised up to deliver the Jews when the armies of Nebuchadnezzar laid waste Jerusalem, and made the inhabitants thereof captives, in which state they continued seventy years, and as what follows manifestly relates to some future period, I cannot help thinking that the seven shepherds are the seven Maccabees; namely, Mattathias and his five sons, with Hyrcanus the son of Simon; and the eight princes, the Asmonean race; beginning with Aristobulus, and ending with Mariamne, who was married to Herod. This interpretation connects the several oracles in this and the foregoing chapter, and leads us naturally, and in due order of time, from the destruction of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar, to the birth of Christ; for, when she who travailed had brought forth in Beth-lehem, then the goings-forth of him, who in the fulness of the dispensations of God's providence was to be ruler in Israel, or king of the Jews, were perfected. Let it be observed here, that a chain of prophecy, extending from the days of Micah to those of Herod, or much longer, from Balaam to Titus, confirmed in every part by events absolutely out of all human power to have foreseen, is such an evidence of these ancient records, as ought not to be rejected." See much more on the subject, in Sharpe's Second Argument, p. 172.

Ver. 7. *And the remnant of Jacob shall be—as a dew, &c.*] The dews were of the greatest service in this land, which was watered by rain only in two seasons of the year. The word *dew*, therefore, is used figuratively, to express any thing fructifying and exhilarating; and is well applied to the Maccabees, who, relying on the divine help, and without any foreign aid, with a small band overthrew mighty armies of the enemy, and were in their walls like lions; and young lions; bringing the greatest comfort and the highest honour to their afflicted country. See Houbigant.

Ver. 10. *And it shall come to pass, &c.*] That is, in that interval

10 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots :

11 And I will cut off the cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strong holds :

12 And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand : and thou shalt have no more sooth-sayers :

13 Thy graven images also will I cut off,

and thy standing images out of the midst of thee ; and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands.

14 And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee : so will I destroy thy cities.

15 And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen, such as they have not heard.

interval of time which was between the first and last destruction of Jerusalem ; for during that period the Jews worshipped no false gods, and had no prophets or sooth-sayers of false gods ; and at the end of this period the Romans took their city, and utterly overthrew their government and nation. See Houbigant.

Ver. 11. *And I will cut off the cities, &c.* See Hosea, i. vii. Bishop Sherlock is of opinion, that the present passage is to the same import with that in Hosea ; and that the meaning is, their salvation should be so perfect and complete, that they should want neither forces nor strong holds ; for God would be to them instead of armies and fortified towns. See Sherlock on Prophecy, Dissert. iv. p. 382.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. Troublous times prophesied against the Jews. See the Annotations.

2. The Messiah is promised, the grand support of his true spiritual Israel in every time of their distress : the hopes of his appearing may well keep them from sinking into despair, and engage them to wait patiently for him. *But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel ; whose goings-forth have been from old, from everlasting.* St. Matthew has left us no doubt concerning whom these words are spoken : they relate to Christ, and of him the ancient Jewish interpreters understood them. [1.] They fix the place of his nativity at Beth-lehem. [2.] They describe the office of the Messiah to be a ruler in Israel ; not indeed over Israel after the flesh, but over his spiritual subjects, the children of Abraham by faith. [3.] They assert his eternal Godhead : *from everlasting are his goings-forth.* Though, as man, he came forth from the lineage of David, and out of the city of Beth-lehem, as God he is from everlasting to everlasting, *without beginning of days or end of life.*

3. Before his appearing in the flesh the Jews shall go through much tribulation. *Therefore, or notwithstanding, will he give them up, for a while, to be harassed by their enemies, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth ;* which may be referred to the blessed virgin the mother of Christ, of whom the long-expected Saviour, in the fulness of time, should be born for the consolation of Israel. But others refer these words to Christ's rejection of the Jewish nation for a while, for their unbelief, until the church, the spiritual Zion, has brought forth the ful-

ness of the Gentiles : *then the remnant of his brethren, the Jewish people, shall return unto the children of Israel, and be admitted into the gospel church.* Or this may comprehend the Gentiles also, whom Christ is not ashamed to call his brethren, Heb. ii. 11. who with the Jews will become at last one fold under one shepherd. But see the critical notes for other interpretations.

4. The people of Christ shall then be safe and happy under his blessed government. *He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, clothed with divine power, able to protect the sheep of his pasture, and watching over them with kind solicitude, providing for their wants, and ministering to them out of his fulness ; in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God, being himself, in his nature and perfections, very God ; and also, as Mediator, invested with a delegated power over all in heaven and earth ; and therefore they shall abide, or they shall sit under his shadow, quiet and safe from fear of evil : for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth, when, his Gospel being spread abroad, all flesh shall see his glory, and the nations be gathered unto him. And this man shall be the peace : man is not in the original : this shall be the peace ; this Messiah, who by the blood of his cross shall make peace with God on the behalf of perishing sinners, and by his grace shall preserve his faithful people from all the enemies of his souls ; when the Assyrian shall come into our land ; as he delivered them from Sennacherib's invasion, so will he still protect those who cast all their confidence on him from the power of the wicked : and when he shall tread in our palaces, and seems ready to swallow up the people of God, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men : the Lord, their protector, has instruments ready to employ in the service of his believing people, and for the destruction of their enemies : and they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof : thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders.* And this destruction of these inveterate enemies of the church of old seems to prefigure the conquests of the Gospel, before which Satan and the powers of darkness fell as lightning from heaven ; and may be considered as having respect also to the final destruction of Christ's enemies, when the Pagan, Papal, and Mahometan powers, which last now possess these countries, shall be entirely destroyed. Note ; (1.) Christ's believing people need not fear, though surrounded with enemies, or assaulted by temptations ; *he will be their peace when*

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God's controversy for unkindness, for ignorance, for injustice, and for idolatry.

[Before Christ 710.]

HEAR ye now what the LORD saith; Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice.

2 Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the LORD hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel.

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

4 For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

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

6 ¶ Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?

7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for

when the Assyrian cometh into the land. (2.) All the church's foes shall shortly be made her footstool; a little faith and patience will issue in eternal triumphs for the faithful saints of God.

2dly, A glorious remnant of Jacob, penitently returning to the true Messiah, and embracing him by faith and constant love, shall be saved; blessed themselves, and a blessing unto others. And this remnant may be understood, either of those who were the first preachers of the Gospel, whose word distilled as the dew, and who vanquished the superstition and idolatry of the Gentile world; or of the faithful people of God in general, who are at present but a remnant, compared with the unregenerate throughout the world.

1. They shall be *as the dew in the midst of many people*, numerous as dew-drops, of heavenly extraction, fruitful in good works, and blessings to all around them; *as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of man*; and so free and bounteous are the gifts of God's grace, preventing our desires, and above all our deserts.

2. They shall be *as a lion among the beasts of the forest*, so courageous and strong; and before them their enemies shall be as a flock of helpless sheep, unable to make the least resistance, and shall fall an easy prey. Thus shall it be at the last with all who persist in their enmity against Christ and his church: they shall perish together.

3. They shall cease from all human confidences, nor any longer need them, when all their foes are fallen. *Their horses and chariots for war shall be destroyed*, as useless, and the fortifications of *their cities*, and their *strongholds* be demolished: and a mercy it is when these vain confidences are taken from us, which were a temptation to us to trust on them more than in God. *Their witchcrafts and unlawful arts of divination shall be cut off*, and never more regarded. Every monument of idolatry shall be utterly abolished, their images and groves cast down; and *the cities where idolatry prevailed*, or the temples large as cities, dedicated to their idols, destroyed; or, as in the

margin of our English bibles, *thy enemies*, both within and without.

4. Vengeance shall then light on every disobedient sinner, *such as they have not heard*, so terrible; or *which have not heard*, refused to receive the Lord Christ, and disregarded his salvation; for which judgment shall come upon them to the uttermost.

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Ver. 1. Hear ye now, &c.] This is a new discourse, addressed to the ten tribes. The Lord commands the prophet to call Israel to judgment before the mountains and the hills, and to receive the condemnation of their ingratitude, infidelity, injustice, and impiety.

Ver. 2. And ye strong foundations of the earth] And ye valleys in the lower parts of the earth. Houbigant. Schul-tens has it, *Ye abiding,—or everlasting foundations, &c.* And instead of *testify against me*, ver. 3. Houbigant reads *answer me*.

Ver. 5. From Shittim unto Gilgal] From Shittim even unto the mountainous places, whither Balak carried Balaam, that he might thence curse the people of Israel. The original word is חַגְלַל *hagilgal*, the root whereof is חַגַל *gal*, a *heap*, or *high place*. See Gen. xxxi. 46. 52, &c. Balak was beyond Jordan, at its eastern bank, where we do not read of there having been any such place as Gilgal; for the Gilgal where the ark continued for some time was situated on this side Jordan. Instead of *righteousness*, Houbigant reads *goodness*. See his note, and Calmet.

Ver. 6. Wherewith shall I come, &c.] This is the answer of the people; they offer nothing in their justification; they oppose nothing to what the Lord hath said; for what could they say against a God who had convinced them in so strong and affecting a manner? They declare themselves ready to offer any expiatory sacrifice, however costly, if that would propitiate the displeasure of the Almighty, and avert his judgments; representing exactly the temper of hypocrites and habitual sinners, who hope to obtain God's favour by performing the external duties of religion.

my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

8 He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

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

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

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

12 For the rich men thereof are full of

violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue *is* deceitful in their mouth.

13 Therefore also will I make *thee* sick in smiting thee, in making *thee* desolate because of thy sins.

14 Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied; and thy casting down *shall be* in the midst of thee; and thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver; and *that* which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword.

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

16 ¶ For the statutes of Omri are kept, and

Ver. 7. *Of rivers of oil*] *Of fatted sheep.* Houbigant. The LXX read, *Fat kids.* It was usual with the Phœnicians, in great dangers, to offer to their gods the dearest of their children. See 2 Kings, iii. 27.

Ver. 8. *He hath shewed thee, O man, &c.*] See here the true spirit of the law of the Lord! See here what makes a true Israelite! A truth, which the carnal Jews could never comprehend. In vain did their legislator and their prophets inculcate it upon every occasion. They had always recourse to their gross conceptions, their attachment to sacrifices, and merely external services: herein they imagined their piety, their religion, to consist; while they neglected the more essential duties of man, and the practice of the most solid virtues, justice, benevolence, and piety. Compare Titus, ii. 12. Houbigant reads, *I will shew thee, O man, &c.*

Ver. 9. *The Lord's voice crieth, &c.*] *The voice of the Lord crieth to the city, that there may be salvation to him who shall fear his name: they have heard him rebuking; but who yet acknowledged him?* Ver. 10. *While there are, &c.* Houbigant.

Ver. 11. *Shall I count them pure, &c.*] *Shall I use the wicked balance, and the stones of deceitful weight, that I may absolve this city.* Ver. 12. *Whose rich men are full, &c.* Houbigant.

Ver. 13. *Sick*] *Sore.* Schultens.

Ver. 14. *Thy casting-down shall be, &c.*] *Darkness shall be upon thee; thou shalt fly away, but shalt not escape; and if any one shall escape, I will give him up to the sword.* See Houbigant and the LXX.

Ver. 16. *For the statutes of Omri are kept*] *Because thou keepst the statutes, &c. and followest their counsels, that I should make thee a desolation, and thine inhabitants a hissing; therefore, &c.* See Houbigant.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, This chapter begins a new subject.

1. The prophet is summoned to arise, and contend before the mountains; he must cry so loud, that the hills may echo

again, publicly to expose the shame of Israel, and call even these inanimate creatures, the very foundations of the earth, to witness against the stupidity and insensibility of this people, who, when God spoke, turned a deaf ear to his admonitions. *Note*; They who plead earnestly for God, must cry aloud, though mockers revile the vehemence of their discourse.

2. The cause of this earnestness is, the *controversy* which God hath against *his people*, whose sins are great and aggravated, and call for vengeance upon them. Though they are called Israel, their national relation to God serves to aggravate their offence.

3. He expostulates with them on their base ingratitude. He challenges them to shew that he had ever done aught to provoke their ill-usage, or been a severe master to them in the services which he had enjoined them. He reminds them of the repeated and inestimable favours that he had showered upon them; bringing them from their bondage in Egypt, raising them up divinely-appointed leaders, guiding them safely through the wilderness, baffling the devices of Balak, and compelling Balaam, the prophet whom he had sent for to curse Israel, to answer him with blessings instead of curses upon their heads; *from Shittim to Gilgal* he brought them into the promised land, notwithstanding the abominations which they had committed with the Moabites: and all this was done *that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord*, the faithfulness of God to his promises, his goodness to them, and the justice of his present controversy against them for the base returns that they had made. Whenever he pleads against us, surely there is a cause.

2dly, Some suppose that the words contained in the 6th and 7th verses are the words of Israel, desiring to make up the controversy with Jehovah, and inquiring the way. Others suppose that they are the words of Balak to Balaam, solicitous to gain, at any rate, an interest in God to curse Israel, though at the expence of the sacrifice of his first-born. In this latter sense,

1. Balak suggests his readiness to offer the most expensive

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

five sacrifices, even *thousands of rams*, or *ten thousands of rivers of oil*, speaking hyperbolically; nay, if a more precious oblation was needful to make the atonement, even the fruit of his body, his first-born son, shall bleed: and this may be applied to the awakened sinner seeking reconciliation with God; trembling before his majesty, inquiring of his ministers what he must do to be saved, brought into the dust of humiliation, solicitous to avert his displeasure and obtain his favour; burthened with sin upon his conscience, to be relieved from which he could willingly part with the dearest thing that he possesses; not that aught we can do could ever satisfy offended justice. The blood of all mankind had never been able to make satisfaction for the least sin; the blood of Jesus alone is the effectual propitiation.

2. Balaam answers his inquiry. *He hath showed thee, O man, what is good*; not external offerings, but moral duties are what he prescribes; *and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly*, administering impartial justice to his subjects, and seeing that none be oppressed with wrong; *to love mercy*, delighting in all acts of kindness and benevolence towards the distressed and indigent; *and to walk humbly with thy God*, acknowledging his own insignificance, and ascribing to God the glory due unto his name.

If we consider this as an answer given to a guilty conscience seeking reconciliation, we have, (1.) The object of faith proposed in the words *thy God*; in Christ Jesus he becomes such to the believing sinner, who, through the infinite merit and intercession of the Redeemer, is entitled to an interest in his favour and regard. (2.) The duty which God requires of those who truly turn to him, is not any outward thing merely, but the heart devoted to his will and service; and what he commands is not only *good* and right in itself, but good for us, conducing to our happiness as well as his glory. And this is, [1.] *To do justice*, rendering to all their due, and injuring none in body, soul, goods, or fame. [2.] *To love mercy*, not only extending relief to the necessitous, and pardoning every offence, but delighting to be employed in doing good, and counting the service its own reward. And, [3.] *To walk humbly with God*, conscious of the poverty and unprofitableness of our best services, submissive to his government, and resigned to his providences.

3dly, Their ingratitude being too plain, God's controversy proceeds against them.

1. They are commanded to hearken. *The Lord's voice crieth unto the city*, unto the capital, where wickedness most abounded; or to every city in the land: *and the man of wisdom shall see thy name*, adore his perfections legible in his providences, and in the judgments that he executes on the earth; this being the highest point of wisdom, to know God, and observe his agency in every dispensation. *Hear ye the rod*, the warnings that God gives in his word and pro-

vidences, which the man of heavenly wisdom bids us remark; *and see God's hand in the stroke*, *who hath appointed it*, in time, measure, and duration, according to his appointing, permissive, or suffering will. *Note*; (1.) The voice of God's true ministers is the voice of God, and to be heard with reverence and submission. (2.) Every providence has a tongue, if we have but ears to attend the message that it brings. (3.) When we see that God has appointed the rod, it becomes us to bow down in silent resignation, solicitous only to answer the end for which our afflictions are sent.

2. A charge of fraud and violence is brought against them, for which God will not hold them guiltless. By scanty measures, and false weights, they increased their treasures; and the rich by violence and oppression filled their houses with spoil, of which, after all the warnings given them, they had not yet made restitution. And the inhabitants of inferior station, copying after their wealthier neighbours, by lies and deceit imposed on the unwary who dealt with them, and made no scruple of falsehood, in order to make the greater gain of their wares: and as they robbed one another, they robbed God also of his glory by foul idolatry. *The statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab*; the same abominations were practised as the wicked kings had enjoined; nor would its being the statute law of their kingdom be any exculpation of the crime; no authority can supersede the divine commands.

3. For these things God will judge them. *Therefore will I make thee sick in smiting thee*, with fore judgments, which should lay waste their kingdom, and make them desolate, *because of their sins*. *Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied*, either wanting food, or the curse of God being upon their provision; *and thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee*, intestine discords should render them an easy conquest for the invading foe; their attempts to rescue their friends and families from captivity should be fruitless: or if they preserved a part, another enemy should quickly consume it. Their corn, wine, and oil should fail them, blasted, and never coming to maturity; or spoiled and devoured by the enemy. Thus they shall be made a *desolation*, Samaria, their capital, being destroyed by Salmaneser, *and the inhabitants thereof an hissing*, the whole land going into captivity, and treated with scorn and derision by their insulting conquerors; *therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people*, the wrath threatened against them in the law if they proved rebellious; or the reproach due to the oppressors for their cruelty and injustice to God's believing people. *Note*; (1.) When God will visit, he can permit a spirit of discord to go through a land, and make a sinful people their own executioners. (2.) None deserve severer reproach than those who, by their ungracious conduct, bring a dishonour upon the religious profession which they made.

CH A P. VII.

The church, complaining of her small number, and the general corruption, putteth her confidence not in man, but in God. She triumpheth over her enemies. God comforteth her by promises, by confusion of the enemies, and by his mercies.

[Before Christ 710.]

WO E is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape-gleanings of the vintage: *there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the first ripe fruit.*

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

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

4 The best of them *is* as a brier: the most upright *is* sharper than a thorn-hedge: the day of thy watchmen *and* thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity.

5 ¶ Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom.

6 For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house.

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

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

9 I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, *and* I shall behold his righteousness.

10 Then *she that is* mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the LORD thy God? mine eyes shall behold her: now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets.

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

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

13 Notwithstanding, the land shall be deso-

CH A P. VII.

Ver. 1. For I am as when they have gathered] For I am like to those who are about to gather the summer fruits, and to him who is about to pluck the vintage: there are no grapes which I can eat, nor first-fruits which my soul desireth. Houbigant; who supposes, that the prophet here introduces our Saviour speaking; and certainly the discourse of the prophet, and the conduct of our Lord, Mark, xi. 13. have a great conformity to each other.

Ver. 3. That they may do evil with both hands earnestly] Their hands are prepared for evil, not for good: the prince asketh, and the judge demandeth for him. He who is great openly avows the wickedness of his soul, and they detest him. Houbigant.

Ver. 4. The most upright is sharper than a thorn-hedge] Rauwolf tells us, that about Tripoli there are abundance of vineyards and fine gardens, inclosed for the most part with hedges; between which gardens, run several roads and pleasant shady walks. The hedges, he says, chiefly consist of the rhamnus, paliurus, and other thorny plants. The prophet alludes to these. See the Observations, p. 217.

Ver. 7. Therefore I will look unto the Lord] The same divine Person, says Houbigant, goes on to speak, who said in the Gospel, A man's enemies are these of his own

household; and who clearly foretels here both his passion and resurrection.

Ver. 9. Because I have sinned against him] Because I am about to be his victim, or sacrifice for sin. Nothing is more common in the sacred Scripture, than to denote the expiation of sin by the word *חַטָּאת* *cheit*. See Houbigant.

Ver. 11. In the day, &c.] In the day that thy walls shall be rebuilt, that day shall remove from thee the decree or judgment; that is to say, thine established laws; the laws of thy kingdom and temple. That threats, not promises, are contained in this passage, will appear probable to the reader who attends to what follows; particularly the words, The land shall be desolate. The Jews then lost their rites, and the laws of their kingdom, when they had but just repaired their walls under the reign of Herod, who rebuilt and enlarged the temple, and fortified the city. See Houbigant.

Ver. 12. In that day, &c.] That day shall bring thine enemies, as from Assyria, so also from Egypt; as from Egypt, so also from the river, &c. The Roman forces came against the Jews, both from Egypt, and from the countries of the East, which were formerly subject to the Assyrians. Houbigant.

Ver. 13. Notwithstanding, the land shall be desolate] And the land shall be laid waste, with its inhabitants; this shall be the fruit of their doings. Houbigant.

late because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings.

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

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

16 The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay *their* hand upon *their* mouth, their ears shall be deaf.

Ver. 14. Feed thy people] These are the words of the prophet to the same divine Person who had said that he should *arise* after he had *fallen*, ver. 8. considering whom as a shepherd, he prays him to feed his flock in fertile pastures; for this is meant by Bashan, Gilead, and Carmel. The prophet, therefore, prays for those sheep of whom Christ himself hath said, *My sheep hear my voice*. The Messiah answers the prophet in the 15th verse, where, instead of *Thy coming out*, we should read, *His coming out*.

Ver. 16. The nations shall see] The prophet speaks here, to the end of the chapter; foretelling the miracles of the rising church, and the pardon of sins to be given by the Lord Jesus Christ. See Houbigant.

Ver. 19. And thou wilt cast all their sins, &c.] Houbigant very properly joins the preceding clauses in this verse to the 18th, because the words pass into the second person, which continues to be used in the 20th verse. The whole is a beautiful prediction of gospel grace and mercy.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The prophet here bewails his unhappy fate, compelled to dwell among such an abandoned people; for a gracious heart is pained to behold the overflowings of ungodliness.

1. He was singular and solitary, and scarcely could find a gracious companion amid the thousands of his countrymen; so few good men remained, as the berries which hung on the vine after the gleanings. *There is no cluster to eat*, no society of upright men to join with; *my soul desired the first ripe fruit*, longed for the converse of such as had the first fruits of the Spirit, as the holy men of old; but there were none remaining. *The good man is perished out of the earth, and there is none upright among men*, at least the prophet could not find them; but, like Elijah, thought he was left alone. *Note*; It is a sad symptom of a nation's ruin, when good men are taken away, and they who rise up in their places appear utterly degenerated from the piety of their ancestors.

2. They stop at nothing to get wealth, lying *in wait for blood*, that they may seize the spoil of the innocent; and, like wild beasts, hunting their very brethren into their toils, that they may plunder and oppress them. With *both hands* earnestly they set themselves to the practice of

17 They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the LORD our God, and shall fear because of thee.

18 ¶ Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth *in* mercy.

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

wickedness; and even the magistrates and princes are chief in the transgression, judging for reward; money, not justice, ever carrying the cause before them: *and the great man he uttereth his mischievous desire; so they wrap it up, or twist it together*; emboldened by the known corruption of the judges, he is not afraid to appear openly in a bad cause; and having the princes on his side, they make the cords of iniquity strong, or *they perplex it*, rendering the matter so intricate, that the truth cannot be easily unravelled. *The best of them*, and bad indeed is that best, *is as a brier*, mischievous and hurtful; *and the most upright is sharper than a thorn-hedge*; they who have any transactions with them are sure to be scratched and torn; and for such abominations God will visit them; *the day of thy watchmen and thy visitation cometh*, the day which the true prophets predicted, and the time when judgment should pass on the wicked watchmen in church and state; *now shall be their perplexity*, unable to extricate themselves from the troubles in which they were involved.

3. All good faith was lost among them; no such thing as a friend was to be met with, and no confidence to be put in any who pretended to be a guide in church or state; nay, the very wife of their bosom was not to be trusted, being in those degenerate days base enough to betray the secrets of her husband.

4. All reverence of parents was banished, *the son dishonoureth the father*, speaking contemptuously of him, behaving disrespectfully and disobediently; and *the daughter riseth up against the mother*, with sauciness unbecoming her sex, as well as her relation; *the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law*; and *a man's enemies are the men of his own house*; his children, his servants, who should be most solicitous to advance his interest, conspiring to ruin him. *Note*; Nothing shews an abandoned heart more strongly than contempt of parental authority.

2dly, In these calamitous times the prophet looks upward; thence cometh his hope. *I will look unto the Lord*, since no dependence was to be placed on man; *I will wait for the God of my salvation*, for the performance of his promises, the removal of the present distresses, or for Christ's appearing, whose incarnation the good men of old so earnestly desired; *my God will hear me*, and answer my prayers, of which also all his believing people may

20 Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.

be confident, when they patiently wait upon him. Having thus cast his care upon God, the prophet, in the person of his people,

1. Professes his confidence in God. *Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy*; though cast down, God's believing people were not destroyed from the face of the earth; and short would be the triumphing of their enemies; *when I fall, I shall arise*, strengthened with divine power; *when I sit in darkness*, disconsolate, dejected, *the Lord shall be a light unto me*, reviving, comforting, and quickening me, and bringing me out of all my afflictions; and thus at all times ought believers to stay themselves upon him.

2. He humbly bows before the chattering rod, and owns the righteousness of the sufferings brought upon the land. *I will bear the indignation of the Lord* with patient submission, *because I have sinned against him*, and therefore should not dare to murmur against God's righteous judgments; for all true penitents lay their mouths in the dust; whatever indignation is upon them, their sins have deserved it, and they will justify God in his judgments; and, so doing, they may hope for God's appearing on their behalf; *until he plead my cause*, as he assuredly will for all such in due time; *and execute judgment for me*, pouring down vengeance on all the oppressors of his people; and *he will bring me forth to the light*, espouse their quarrel; and, rescuing them from their calamities, make his favour towards them openly appear; *and I shall behold his righteousness*; his justice in punishing their wicked enemies, his grace in succouring his afflicted people, his faithfulness in accomplishing his promises; for they who humbly submit themselves to God, and cast their care upon him, shall ever find that he careth for them.

3. Their enemies, covered with confusion, shall behold this salvation, so unlike what they looked for. They once tauntingly asked, *Where is the Lord thy God?* and now they are answered, *Lo! this is our God*, and we have waited for him: *mine eye shall behold her*; their enemies, reduced to the lowest state of abject wretchedness; *now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets*: which was fulfilled in the conquest of Babylon by the Persians, and shall be proved true in the destruction of all the foes of God's spiritual faithful Israel. *In the day that thy walls are to be built*, the walls of Jerusalem, after their return from Babylon; *in that day shall the decree be far removed*, which obstructed the building for a while. *In that day also shall she come even to thee*, multitudes of the Jews returning to Jerusalem from Assyria, and from the fortified cities, where they had been captives, and from all places whither they had been dispersed and fled for shelter. And in a spiritual sense this may be applied to the building of the walls of the spiritual Zion; into which, from all parts, multitudes of converts will flock together. *Notwithstanding, the land shall be desolate, because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings*, these gracious prophecies shall not supersede the divine threatenings going before, so as to embolden the impenitent with hopes of impunity. See the Annotations for another interpretation of this passage.

3dly, We have,

1. The prophet's prayer on the behalf of his people. *Feed thy people with thy rod*, directing them in their way, and bringing them into green pastures; *the flock of thine heritage*, whom he had as a nation called to be a peculiar people; *which dwell solitarily in the wood*, separated from the rest of mankind, to preserve the worship of Jehovah, the one true and only God; and even in their captivity unmixed with the nations; *in the midst of Carmel*, scattered in Assyria, as sheep upon a mountain without a shepherd: *let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old*, in the richest pastures, abounding in all blessings spiritual and temporal; as will be the case when they shall be gathered from their dispersion into the gospel-church, and made one fold with the Gentiles under one shepherd.

2. God is pleased graciously to answer the prophet's prayer. *According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt, will I shew unto him marvellous things*; as wonderful should be their deliverance from Babylon, as from Egypt; and more amazing his work of redemption by Jesus Christ, rescuing his believing people from their spiritual enemies, and eclipsing all the former manifestations of his power and grace exerted on their behalf. Their insulting foes shall then be confounded, silent with shame, and stopping their ears, as unwilling to hear the wonders of God's love towards his faithful ones. Yea, the curse of the serpent shall be upon them, Gen. iii. 14. trodden into the dust, and prostrate before those whom once they trampled upon like *worms of the earth*, scarcely daring to lift their heads from their lurking-places; for fear of *the Lord our God*, whose judgments are upon them; and *because of thee*, whom they have abused, but now behold triumphant over them. And so low shall every enemy of Christ's church and people be brought at last.

3. With wonder, love, and praise, the prophet beholds what God is about to do for his church. *Who is a god like unto thee?* None can be found like him for the perfections of his nature, and the works of his providence and grace; especially *that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage*; this being God's distinguishing glory, that he is a pardoning God; and this above all things raises the admiration, and engages the affections of the miserable, broken-hearted sinner: *he retaineth not his anger for ever*; though for a time, by our unfaithfulness, we provoke him to visit our iniquities with the rod, and our sin with scourges, he is not implacable nor inexorable, if we look to him in true contrition; but ready to receive the returning soul, *because he delighteth in mercy*, and waits to be gracious; more ready to pardon than we to pray, and willing to give exceeding abundantly beyond all that we can ask or think. *He will turn again towards the penitent sinner*, though he withdraw for a little moment his loving-kindness in displeasure, and turn away his face from him; *he will have compassion upon us*, when we mourn his absence, and seek his return; he will then

then lift up again the light of his countenance, removing our sorrows, and speaking peace to our troubled but longing souls: *he will subdue our iniquities*, delivering us from the power as well as punishment of them; breaking the yoke of corruption, and putting our inbred enemies under our feet. His grace shall overcome our depravity, and sin shall not have any longer the dominion over us: which a soul that has tasted the bitterness of sin looks upon as the most inestimable blessing: *and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea*; they shall be not only forgiven,

but, as it were, forgotten; totally done away in the blood of a Redeemer. *Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham*; the faithfulness of God is engaged to every faithful soul for the fulfilment of the covenant, *which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old*, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible that God should lie, we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge, to lay hold of the hope set before us. And for this, for ever and for ever praise the Lord, O my soul!

THE BOOK
OF THE
PROPHET NAHUM.

NAHUM was a native of *Elkosba*, a little village of Galilee. The particular circumstances of his life are altogether unknown; nor is there any certainty as to the time when he prophesied. We are inclined, says Calmet, to be of St. Jerome's opinion, that he foretold the destruction of Nineveh in the time of Hezekiah, and after the war of Sennacherib. Nahum speaks plainly, chap. iii. 8. of the taking of No-Ammon, a city of Egypt; of the haughtiness of Rabshakeh, and of the defeat of Sennacherib; and he speaks of them as things that were past. He supposes that the people of Judah were still in their own country, and that they there celebrated their festivals. He speaks of the captivity, and of the dispersion of the ten tribes; all which marks convince us that Nahum cannot be placed before the fifteenth year of Hezekiah, since the expedition of Sennacherib against this prince was in the fourteenth year of his reign; and as the taking of Nineveh, foretold by him, cannot be the first siege of this place, which happened after Sardanapalus, a long time before, that is to say, in the year of the world 3257, it must necessarily be understood of the second siege of the same city, formed by Nabopolassar and Astyages in the year of the world 3378, before Christ 622, and before the vulgar æra 626; which comes to the sixteenth year of king Josiah, under whom St. Jerome places the destruction of Nineveh. Tobit says, chap. xiv. 15. that this city was taken by Nebuchadnezzar and Abasuerus, giving the name of Nebuchadnezzar to Nabopolassar, and to Astyages that of Abasuerus. Nahum, according to St. Jerome, signifies a comforter; for, the ten tribes being carried away by the king of Assyria, this vision was to comfort them in their captivity; nor was it a less consolation to the other two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, who remained in the land, and were besieged by the same enemies, to hear that these conquerors would in time be conquered themselves, their city taken, and their empire overthrown. None of the minor prophets, says Bishop Lowth, seem to equal the sublimity, fire, and spirit of Nahum: besides, his prophecy is an entire and perfect poem. The exordium is extremely magnificent: the preparation for the destruction of Nineveh, and the description of that destruction, are painted in the most glowing colours, and are admirably clear and grand. See Bishop Lowth's 21st. Prelection, and Calmet.

C H A P. I.

The majesty of God, in goodness to his people, and severity against his enemies.

[Before Christ about 713.]

THE burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

2 God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.

3 The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in

in the storm, and the clouds *are* the dust of his feet.

4 He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth.

5 The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.

6 Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.

7 The LORD *is* good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.

8 But with an over-running flood he will

make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies.

9 What do ye imagine against the LORD? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time.

10 For while *they be* folden together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry.

11 There is *one* come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the LORD, a wicked counsellor.

12 Thus saith the LORD, Though *they be* quiet, and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more.

13 For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder.

CHAP. I.

Ver. 1. The burden of Nineveh] *The sentence upon Nineveh.* See the Argument, and Isai. xiii. 1. Bishop Newton observes, that if there be some difficulty in discovering the persons by whom Nineveh was taken, there is more in ascertaining the king of Assyria in whose name it was taken; and more still in fixing the time when it was taken; scarcely any two chronologies agreeing in the same date. But as these things are hardly possible to be known, so neither are they necessary to be known with precision and exactness; and we may safely leave them among the uncertainties of ancient history and chronology. It is sufficient for our purpose, that Nineveh was taken and destroyed according to the predictions, and that Nahum foretold not only the thing but also the manner of it.

Ver. 2. God is jealous, &c.] This and the following verses, to the eighth, are a preamble, like that of many others in the Prophets, to prepare the mind of the reader, and to impress upon him sentiments of respect and fear. As God is very jealous of his honour, so will he not fail to execute his judgments on those who affront and dishonour him; and though he does not always punish impenitent sinners immediately, yet he will not fail in due time to execute his severity upon them. The repetition of the word *revenge* denotes not only the greatness of the divine anger, but the certainty of the punishment. The reader will observe, that many of the ideas in the following verses are taken from the description of the Almighty's descent on mount Sinai.

Ver. 5. The earth is burned, &c.] *Is made desolate.* Houb.

Ver. 7. The Lord is good, &c.] *The Lord is good to him who trusts in him in the day of trouble: he careth for those who confide in him.* This is said very appositely by the prophet, prophesying against Nineveh, after the overthrow of the army of Sennacherib, and the mercies vouchsafed to Hezekiah, who had put his trust in the Lord.

Ver. 8. But with an over-running flood, &c.] The passage may be rendered, *But in the overflowing of wrath he will make an end, that there shall be no rising up more; but utter darkness shall pursue his enemies.* Houbigant renders it, *But, as an overflowing flood, he passes through to make an utter end of those who resist him; and darkness pursues his enemies.* See the note on chap. ii. 6.

Ver. 9. What do ye imagine] *Why do ye take counsel? &c.* The prophet says this to the Ninevites, who seemed willing to repair the loss of Sennacherib's army, and to invade Judæa; and it is most likely, says Houbigant, that Nahum, when he delivered this prediction, was a captive in Nineveh, as was Tobias, or in some neighbouring place.

Ver. 10. For while they be folden, &c.] *For they who sit round their cups, and are drunken as drunkards, shall be, &c.* Houbigant. Diodorus relates, that while all the Assyrian army were feasting for their former victories, those about Arbaces, being informed by some deserters of the negligence and drunkenness in the camp of the enemies, assaulted them unexpectedly by night; and, falling orderly upon them disordered, and prepared on them unprepared, became masters of the camp, slew many of the soldiers, and drove the rest into the city. See Newton's Prophecies, vol. i.

Ver. 11. There is one come out, &c.] *Wherefore comes there out from thee him who meditated evil against the Lord, and used wicked counsels?* Pointing out Sennacherib, who reproached the living God in the epistle which he sent to Hezekiah. See Houbigant.

Ver. 12. Thus saith the Lord, &c.] *Thus saith the Lord to those who rule over many waters: as the waters are many, so shall they be carried away, and passed through. I will so afflict thee, as to afflict thee no more.* The prophet calls the people waters, as is usual in the prophetic style, and because these waters had lately overflowed Judæa and the neighbouring countries. Houbigant.

Ver. 13. For now will I break his yoke, &c.] *I am about*

14 And the LORD hath given a commandment concerning thee, *that* no more of thy name be sown: out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image: I will make thy grave, for thou art vile.

to break the yoke which thou didst impose, and to burst the bonds which thou didst bind. The prophet addresses himself to the king of the Assyrians, as is plain from what goes before, and what follows. Houbigant.

Ver. 14. And the Lord hath given, &c.] And this is the decree of the Lord concerning thee: there shall hereafter be no seed of thy name. I will take away the graven image from the house of thy god, and I will make a little cottage thy sepulchre, because thou art vile. Nahum denounces against king Sennacherib, who was to be slain, that he should not be buried in the royal sepulchre of his fathers, but in some paltry and obscure cottage by his murderers. Houbigant; who closes the chapter with this verse, and begins the second with the 15th, which refers to the entire destruction of the Assyrian army, and the joy of Judah in consequence. Instead of the *wicked*, Houbigant reads *Belial*; referring, as above, to Sennacherib.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, At the preaching of Jonah the Ninevites repented, and were spared; but, returning as the dog to their vomit again, Nahum is sent about a hundred years after to pronounce their doom, and bind the heavy burden of God's wrath upon them.

His prophecy is called *The book of the vision of Nabum*: it was what God revealed to him, and he wrote in a book, and sent probably to Nineveh. The prophet is called the Elkoshite, from the name of the place of his birth.

2dly, Like the pillar of the cloud and fire, the description of the divine perfections and glory, in the second and following verses, speaks terror to the church's foes, and comfort to her friends: wrath most fearful and mercy most adorable are here revealed. To Nineveh God makes himself known:

1. As the *jealous* God, who avengeth the indignities put upon him. The Lord is *jealous* of his own honour, and will not suffer his glory to be given to idols, nor tamely see his people insulted: he *revenge*th; thrice it is repeated, to shew the certainty and fearfulness of his vengeance: he is *furios*, or *master of wrath*, hath it under command, can restrain or let it loose at his pleasure, and this without that perturbation which ever accompanies it in our minds: he *reserveth wrath for his enemies*; though spared long by his patience, there is wrath in store for the impenitent; and, though *slow to anger*, he *will not at all acquit the wicked*, who, in *opposition to all his warnings*, persist in their rebellion against him: they will at last be *condemned and executed*.

2. His *power* is *great*, yea, irresistible: if he be angry, yea, but a little, who may abide it? All the elements wait his orders; the wind and storm fulfil his word, and the clouds are the dust of his feet; on these he cometh forth

15 Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.

to judgment, and desolation marks his way. At his rebuke the sea, the rivers, are dried, as when of old he opened a way through them for his people to pass over; and the most fruitful spots, as Bashan and Carmel, languish when he is pleased to restrain the dew of heaven. His earthquakes shake the tottering mountains and trembling hills; or the mightiest nations, such as the Assyrian, compared to these for strength, are cast down before his indignation. *At his presence the earth is burnt*, with the parching sun-beams, or forked lightnings, yea, *the world, and all that dwell therein*, as it will be at last in the universal conflagration, 2 Pet. iii. 10. Before such indignation, such devouring fire, *who can stand*, when even the massy rocks are thrown down as stubble before him: so weak, so easily ruined, are the greatest kingdoms, and the most hardened and daring sinners. We may well say of such an omnipotent God, that it is good to have him for our friend, but terrible to meet him as an enemy.

3. His mercy to his faithful people is as great as his wrath towards his enemies. *The Lord is good* in himself, and in all the dispensations of his providence and grace; *a strong-hold in the day of trouble*, as Hezekiah found when he was invaded by Sennacherib, and as the faithful will ever prove him to be amid all the trials and temptations with which they are exercised: *he knoweth them that trust in him*, renouncing every other confidence, and staying themselves on him alone; these he knows, approves, delights in, and will protect and preserve them from the power of evil. *But with an over-running flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof*, of Nineveh; his judgments, like a deluge, shall overwhelm the city and destroy it; and *darkness shall pursue his enemies*, the darkness of affliction and trouble here below; and hereafter they shall be driven into eternal darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.

3dly, We have a continuation of the dreadful judgments which Jehovah will inflict upon the Ninevites.

1. The Lord mocks at their impotent designs. *What do ye imagine against the Lord?* how vain the counsel, how fruitless the attempt! *There is one come out of thee*, Sennacherib, *that imagineth evil against the Lord*, to plunder his temple, and make captive his people; *a wicked counsellor*, who by Rabshakeh advised the people to despair of God's help, abandon their king, and submit to his yoke, 2 Kings, xviii. 29—31. but their policy was as unavailing as their power. See the Annotations.

2. He threatens them with utter ruin. He will make an end of them at once, and there will be no need to repeat the blow; so complete shall be their destruction. Unprofitable as thorns, and like them bound up ready for the burning, and *drunken as drunkards*, incapable of making resistance, *they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry*, in which

C H A P. II.

The fearful and victorious armies of God against Nineveh.

[Before Christ about 713.]

HE that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face: keep the munition, watch the way, make *thy* loins strong, fortify *thy* power mightily.

2 For the LORD hath turned away the excellency of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel: for the emptiers have emptied them out, and inarred their vine branches.

3 The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men *are* in scarlet: the cha-

riots *shall* be with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, and the fir-trees shall be terribly shaken.

4 The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings.

5 He shall recount his worthies: they shall stumble in their walk; they shall make haste to the wall thereof, and the defence shall be prepared.

6 The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved.

7 And Huzzab shall be led away captive,

the fire rages, and quickly and irrecoverably it is consumed. *Thus saith the Lord*, whose word is faithful, though they be quiet, secure of success, and likewise many, and therefore fearing no opposition, yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through. So often do we see sinners cut off in the midst of their carnal security. Nor shall the king escape: *the Lord hath given a commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy name be sown*; his fame and glory should be spread no farther. *Out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image*; this should be the case when the capital should fall into the enemies' hand: *I will make thy grave, for thou art vile*; which perhaps may refer to king Sennacherib, brought ignominiously to the dust, because of his vileness and wickedness; or to Nineveh, whose inhabitants should be buried in the ruins of the city, because of their iniquities. *Note*; They who make themselves in God's sight vile by their sins, shall shortly be made *an abhorring unto all flesh*.

3. God will save his faithful people out of all their troubles. *Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more*; that is to say, no more by Sennacherib, or his successors in Nineveh, to whom they had been tributary: from their bondage God's people shall be set free, the figure of that more glorious liberty into which Jesus, our Redeemer, has brought the sons of God. Then shall the glad tidings be diffused through the land of Nineveh destroyed; and peace shall return after the ravages of war. Judah must *perform her vows* made in the day of distress, and now piously and thankfully to be paid to God for her complete deliverance from so dreadful an enemy. Nor is this only a present mercy; but it is farther promised, that *the wicked shall no more pass through thee, he is utterly cut off*; no more should they be invaded by them, but the race of Sennacherib, and Nineveh, the seat of empire, should be utterly cut off and destroyed. *Note*; (1.) The gospel proclaims the glad tidings of pardon and peace by Jesus Christ, and of victory over all our spiritual foes; and beautiful upon the mountains are their feet who publish these tidings of joy. (2.) Every mercy that we receive from God should be an engagement to our fidelity, and quicken us in his worship and service.

C H A P. II.

Ver. 1. Before thy face] There can be no doubt that this should be read *before his face*; namely, of that *Belial* spoken of in the last verse, and whose *mighty men* are mentioned in the third verse. It is plain from verse 2. that the desolator was come up, not against Judah, but against the Assyrians. Houbigant renders it, *for the Lord hath restored the glory of Jacob, as the glory of Israel*, after the desolators have exhausted them, &c. Dr. Warburton reads the latter part of the first and the second verse thus, *Strengthen the garrison, guard the passes, invigorate the loins, exert your force mightily*. *Ver. 2. For the Lord hath returned the pride against Jacob, and the pride against Israel: for the emptiers have exhausted them, &c.*

Ver. 3. The shield—is made red] In this and the two following verses we have a most animated and picturesque description of the warlike preparations made against Nineveh; or of the preparations of the king of Nineveh against the besiegers. Houbigant reads this verse, *The shields of his mighty men blaze with splendour, his warriors shine in purple: the chariots, as they stand prepared, glitter with fire: the fir-tree spears or lances are terribly shaken*;—and so on, in the present tense, which gives great force to the description. He renders the fifth verse, *His nobles walk proudly: they march on with indignation; they hasten to the walls, where their tent is prepared*.

Ver. 6. The gates of the rivers shall be opened] Diodorus informs us, that there was an old prophecy, that Nineveh should not be taken till the river became an enemy to the city; and in the third year of the siege the river, being swollen with continual rains, overflowed part of the city, and broke down the wall for twenty furlongs; then the king, thinking that the oracle was fulfilled, and the river become an enemy, built a large funeral pile in the palace, and collecting together all his wealth, his concubines, and eunuchs, burned himself and the palace with them all; and the enemy entered at the breach which the waters had made, and took the city; so that what was predicted in chap. i. ver. 8. was literally fulfilled. See Newton on the Prophecies, vol. i.

Ver. 7. And Huzzab shall be led away, &c.] Houbigant renders

she shall be brought up, and her maids shall lead *her* as with the voice of doves, tabering upon their breasts.

8 But Nineveh *is* of old like a pool of water: yet they shall flee away. Stand, stand, *shall they cry*; but none shall look back.

9 Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold: for *there is* none end of the store *and* glory out of all the pleasant furniture.

10 She *is* empty, and void, and waste; and the heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and much pain *is* in all loins, and the faces of them all gather blackness.

renders this, *And the queen ascends into her upper chamber*; [or the place where to see and lament the ruins of the city;] *and like the voice of doves, so do her maidens lament, beating their breasts.* Others suppose that *Huzzab* signifies a *fortress*, and denotes Nineveh, which is described as a great prince's carried away captive, with her maids of honour attending her, and bewailing both her and their own condition, by beating their breasts, and other expressions of lamentation. According to these commentators, the *maids* denote the lesser cities of the Assyrian kingdom, which should share with the capital in the same calamities. See Grotius and Calmet. But the author of the *Observations* gives us the fullest and clearest explanation of this text. When D'Arvieux was in the camp of the great emir, his prince's was visited by other Arab prince's. The last who came, and whose visit alone he describes, was mounted on a camel covered with carpet, and decked with flowers; a dozen of women marched in a row before her, holding the camel's halter with one hand, while they sung the praises of their mistress, in compositions expressive of joy, and the happiness of being in the service of so beautiful and amiable a lady. Those who went first, and were more distant from her person, came in their turn to the head of the camel, and took hold of the halter; which place, as being the post of honour, they quitted to others, when the prince's had gone a few paces. The emir's lady sent her women to meet her, to whom the halter was entirely quitted out of respect, her own women placing themselves behind the camel: in this order they marched to the tent, where she alighted. They then all sung together the beauty, birth, and good qualities of this prince's. Now, does not this account illustrate the passage before us? Nahum is speaking of the presenting of the queen of Nineveh, or Nineveh itself under the figure of a queen, to her conqueror. He describes her as *led by her maids, with the voice of doves*; with the voice of *mourning*; that is, their wonted songs of *joy*, with which they used to lead her along, as the Arab women did their prince's, being turned into *lamentation*. That the prophet is here speaking of a presentation to a conqueror, is evident from the term *brought up*; which is the same, in the original as well as in

11 Where *is* the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding place of the young lions, where the lion, *even* the old lion, walked, *and* the lion's whelp, and none made *them* afraid?

12 The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin.

13 Behold, I *am* against thee, faith the LORD of Hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions: and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard.

our version, with that used for the conducting of Zedekiah to the place where his conqueror *held his court*. Compare 2 Kings, xxv. 6. Jer. xxxix. 5. Nor were former distinctions altogether lost in captivity, as appears from Jeremiah, xxxiv. 3—5. Though Zedekiah was to die a captive, yet some distinctions of royalty were to be paid him even in captivity: thus *Huzzab* was to be *led by her maids* into the presence of her conqueror, as prince's were usually led, but with the voice of lamentation, instead of the voice of joy. Thus we enter naturally into the force of the expression, *her maids shall lead her, as well as of the term brought up*. See *Observations*, p. 228.

Ver. 8. But Nineveh is of old, &c.] *Nineveh is become as a pool of water. Its waters subvert it: they who fled stand still; they stand still, and know not whither to fly.* See Houbigant, and the note on ver. 6.

Ver. 9. Take ye, &c.] *They have plundered the silver, they have plundered the gold: the weight of them is immense: it is more than all the precious furniture.* We are told by Diodorus, that the conqueror of Nineveh carried away a great many talents of gold and silver. See Houbigant and Bishop Newton.

Ver. 11, 12. Where is the dwelling, &c.] *Where is the dwelling of the lionesses? And the same was the nursery of the young lions: that is, "What has become of the stately " palaces of the king and princes of Nineveh; who, like " so many lions, cruel and violent, knew no other law " than their pride and ambition; preying both upon their " own people and the neighbouring countries, and enrich- " ing themselves with the spoil which they kept from " them."*

Ver. 13. I will burn her chariots] *I will burn thy habitation, &c.* The simile taken from *lions* is continued; and therefore *chariots* is extremely improper. The word refers to the den or habitation of the lions, whom he threatens to suffocate with fire and smoke in their subterraneous caverns; thus keeping up the metaphor.

REFLECTIONS.—*Ist*, Nineveh is doomed to fall, and lo! her enemies approach. *He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face*, that is to say, Nabopolassar the Babylonian.

C H A P. III.

The miserable ruin of Nineveh.

[Before Christ about 713.]

WOE to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and robbery; the prey departeth not;

2 The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots.

nian. The Ninevites are ironically called to *keep the munition*, to guard the walls, to *watch the way* to the avenues of the city, to *make their loins strong*, and *fortify their power mightily*, to do their utmost to ward off the blow; but all their efforts will be vain, since their ruin is determined.

1. The cause of it, among other provocations, is their ill usage of Israel. *The Lord hath turned away the excellency of Jacob as the excellency of Israel*; hath humbled and brought them low, and hath employed the Assyrians as his instruments; but they gratified their pride, covetousness, and ambition herein; *for the emptiers have emptied them out, and marred their vine-branches*, plundering and destroying the country, and leading many of the people into captivity.

2. The terrible destruction coming upon Nineveh, for this and all her other sins, is described. The shields of the enemy are prepared, glittering with burnished brass, or red with the blood of the slain; *the valiant men in scarlet*, magnificently arrayed; *their chariots*, when preparing for the siege, shall shine *with flaming torches*, to direct their way by night, or set fire to the city. *The fir-trees*, the mighty men of Nineveh, *shall be terribly shaken*; quaking for fear, while *the chariots of the enemy rage in the streets* approaching the gates, or entered into the city; so eager to advance, that they shall *jostle one against another*, devouring as *torches of fire*, and swift as *lightning*. *He shall recount his worthies*, choosing out the mighty men to storm the place; and, in haste to obey, they shall stumble, though instantly recovering themselves, and mounting the breach, under the cover of the defence which is prepared; or this may be understood of the king of Nineveh mustering his forces, manning the walls, and preparing to sustain the siege, though his warriors *shall stumble in their walk*, and fall; at last the besiegers shall enter *at the gates of the rivers*, either forced or betrayed into their hands, and then *the palace shall be dissolved*; both the temples of the idols, and the houses of their princes, shall be laid in ruins, and *Huzzab shall be led away captive*, which some interpret of the queen, others of the king, compared to a woman for his effeminacy; or perhaps it may signify Nineveh itself, which before *sat as a queen*, but is now hurled from her dignity, and lamented by her maids of honour, her inhabitants; who, while they are represented supporting her fainting under her calamities, utter their doleful moans, and beat their breasts for grief and anguish. Thus, though of old this mighty city was like a *pool of*

3 The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and *there is a multitude of slain*, and a great number of carcasses; and *there is none end of their corpses*; they stumble upon their corpses:

4 Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well-favoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts.

water, full of wealth and inhabitants, and tranquil and at ease; yet *they shall flee away*, like waters when the dam is broken down, and as weak before their enemies; in vain some gallant chief should cry, *Stand, stand*; panic fear has seized them, and none dare even look behind him. The besiegers now are called to seize *the spoil of silver, gold*, and rich furniture, immense, invaluable; and thoroughly is the city ransacked, and left *empty, void, and waste*; without inhabitant, a heap of ruins; none of that populous place dare resist; their hearts are melted, their knees knock against each other, they are like women in travail, and their countenances darkened like the livid faces of the dead.

2dly, They who insulted over the calamities of others, justly deserve retaliation in the day of their distress.

1. Nineveh is triumphed over by her enemies. Like a lion in time past had the king of this strong city ravened uncontrolled, and filled his young lions with food, and his den with prey; and *strangled for his lionesses*, his wives and concubines, who shared the spoils of the conquered nations, while none dared withstand or oppose him: but where is his dwelling now? it is desolate and ruined. *Note*; Wealth gotten by violence is a precarious tenure, a short-lived possession.

2. God is her enemy, therefore she must fall. *Behold, I am against thee*; and his wrath is more terrible than innumerable foes; he *will burn her chariots in the smoke of the city in flames around them*; and *the sword shall devour the young lions*, the inhabitants thereof and their children, enriched by rapine and spoil; *I will cut off thy prey from the earth*, destroying all their substance which they had collected; and *the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard*, demanding tribute, menacing the poor subjected nations; or like Rabshakeh, uttering their blasphemies against God. *Note*; God will shortly silence the tongue of the blasphemer.

C H A P. III.

Ver. 1—3. Woe to the bloody city! &c.] Woe to the bloody city, which is wholly perfidious and full of cruelty; whence rapines depart not.—Ver. 2. Lo! the sound of the whip is at hand, the sound of the rattling wheel, &c.—Ver. 3. The horseman approacheth, and the glittering sword, and shining spear, &c. Houbigant. Others render the passage thus, Woe to the bloody city, all over deceit, full of robbery and incessant ravenging.—Ver. 2. The cracking of the whip, and the rattling noise of the wheel, and the prancing horse, and the rumbling chariot.

—Ver.

5 Behold, I *am* against thee, saith the LORD of Hosts; and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame.

6 And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazing-stock.

7 And it shall come to pass *that* all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? whence shall I seek comforters for thee?

8 Art thou better than populous No, that was situate among the rivers, *that had* the waters round about it, whose rampart *was* the sea, and her wall *was* from the sea?

9 Ethiopia and Egypt *were* her strength, and *it was* infinite; Put and Lubim were thy helpers.

10 Yet *was* she carried away, she went into captivity: her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets: and they cast lots for her honourable men, and all her great men were bound in chains.

11 Thou also shalt be drunken: thou shalt be hid, thou also shalt seek strength because of the enemy.

12 All thy strong holds *shall be like* fig-trees with the first ripe figs: if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater.

13 Behold, thy people in the midst of thee *are* women: the gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire shall devour thy bars.

14 Draw thee waters for the siege, fortify thy strong holds: go into clay, and tread the mortar, make strong the brick-kiln.

15 There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off, it shall eat thee up like the canker-worm: make thyself many as the canker-worm, make thyself many as the locusts.

16 Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the canker-worm spoileth and fleeth away.

17 Thy crowned *are* as the locusts, and thy

—Ver. 3. *The high-bearing horseman, and the flaming sword, and glittering spear, and vast slaughter, and heaps of carcases! But there is no end of the corpses, &c.*

Ver. 4. *That selleth nations.] That hath deceived the nations.* As the violence and injustice of the Ninevites had been represented under the emblem of a lion, the prophet here paints their irregularities, their idolatry and corruption, under the idea of a prostitute. See Houbigant and Calmet. Those who understand the passage according to our translation, suppose, that by *selling the nations*, the prophet means subduing them, or transferring the right of government to others; or, selling them as slaves to the same service, to imitate her prostitution and disorders. Compare 1 Kings, xxi. 20. 25. Rom. vii. 14.

Ver. 8. *Art thou better than populous No?]* No-ammon. Houbigant. The destruction of No-ammon, or Diospolis in Egypt, which Nahum mentions as a late transaction, would greatly assist in fixing the time of his prophecy, if we could know certainly when that destruction happened, or by whom it was effected. It is commonly attributed to Nebuchadnezzar; but that time is too late, and the destruction of No-ammon would fall out after the destruction of Nineveh, instead of before it. Dr. Prideaux, with more reason, believes, that it was effected by Sennacherib, before he marched against Jerusalem; and then Nahum's prophecy would coincide exactly with the reign of Hezekiah, which is the time assigned for it by St. Jerome. See Bishop Newton, and the introductory note. Instead of, *Whose rampart, &c.* we may read, *Whose rampart was the river [Nile], and her wall from the river.*

Ver. 9. *Ethiopia, &c.]* Houbigant renders this passage,

The Ethiopians and Egyptians, who are innumerable, were her strength: The Africans and Libyans were her helpers.

Ver. 11. *Thou also shalt be drunken.] Therefore thou also [like No-ammon] shalt be bought for a price, and shalt be stigmatized with a mark [as purchased slaves were usually serued], and shalt seek subsistence from thine enemy.* Houbigant.

Ver. 15. *There shall the fire devour thee, &c.]* According to the prophet, the city was to be destroyed by fire and water; and we see in the passage quoted from Diodorus, ch. ii. 6. that by fire and water it was destroyed. See Bishop Newton.

Ver. 17. *Thy crowned.] Thy princes.* The author of the *Observations*, in order to explain the phrase, *Which camp in the hedges in the cold day*, remarks, that the locusts in 1724 and 1725, which in the eastern parts of the world made their first appearance towards the latter end of March, and were prodigiously increased in numbers by the middle of April, began in May gradually to disappear, and retired into the Metijah, and other adjacent places, where they deposited their eggs, which were hatched in June. These swarms put off their nymphal state in about one month, and soon after were dispersed. This retiring in May into the Metijah, a place full of gardens and consequently of *hedges or walls*, while the rest of the country, used for feeding of cattle and as arable lands, is all open, without any inclosure whatever—may possibly explain the above words of the prophet. The word גדרות, translated *hedges*, precisely speaking, seems to mean the walls of a garden. But it may be asked, Can the months of April and May be called *the day of cold* in these countries? I observe, that the same word is made use of

captains as the great grasshoppers which camp in the hedges in the cold day, *but* when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they are.

18 Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria: thy nobles shall dwell *in the dust*: thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth *them*.

to signify that *grateful cooling* which Eglon sought, Judg. iii. 20. that these gardens are the places to which the people of the Levant retire for cooling; and that in April and May, the time when the locusts appear in Palestine, the people at Aleppo retire to their gardens; as also, that the locusts are brought by hot winds; from all which I am led to think *the day of cold* should rather have been translated *the day of cooling*; the time when people first retire to their summer-houses or country-seats. *When the sun ariseth*, says the prophet, *they flee away*, that is, (as I suppose, a like expression, James, i. 11. is to be understood,) "When the summer advances, they are totally dispersed;" and though the Sea is now supposed by the eastern people to be their common grave, yet, that probably not being known to be the fact in Nahum's time, the prophet says, upon occasion of their disappearing, (speaking according to the received opinion,) that *their place is not known where they are*. I will only farther remark on this subject, says our author, that, agreeably to their being called by the prophet *great locusts*, it is observed by some naturalists, that those locusts which appear in such swarms, are larger than the locusts which are seen at other times; and I mention this, because I do not remember to have seen any thing of this sort in the commentators. See *Observations*, p. 120, &c.

Ver. 17—19. Their place is not known] What probability was there, that the capital city of a great kingdom, a city which was sixty miles in compass, a city which contained so many thousand inhabitants, a city which had walls a hundred feet high, and so thick that three chariots could go abreast upon them, and which had 1500 towers of 200 feet in height;—what probability was there that such a city should ever be totally destroyed? and yet so totally was it destroyed, that the place is hardly known where it was situated. What we may suppose helped to complete its ruin and devastation, was Nebuchadnezzar's enlarging and beautifying of Babylon, soon after Nineveh was taken: from that time no mention is made of Nineveh by any of the sacred writers; and the most ancient of the heathen authors, who have occasion to say any thing about it, speak of it as a city which was once great and flourishing, but now destroyed and desolate. Great as it was formerly, so little of it is remaining, that authors are not agreed even about its situation: from the general suffrage of ancient historians and geographers, it appears to have been situated upon the Tigris; though others represent it as placed upon the river Euphrates. Bochart has shewn, that Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, and Ammianus Marcellinus, all three speak differently of it; sometimes as if situated upon the Tigris, sometimes as if on the Euphrates; to reconcile whom he supposes, that there were two Ninevehs; and Sir John Marsham, that there were three; the Syrian upon the Euphrates, the Assyrian on the Tigris, and a third built afterwards upon the Tigris by the Persians, who succeeded the Parthians in the empire of

the East, in the third century, and were subdued by the Saracens in the seventh century after Christ: but whether this latter was built in the same place as the old Nineveh, is a question which cannot be decided. Lucian, who flourished in the second century after Christ, affirms, that Nineveh was utterly perished, and there were no footsteps of it remaining, nor could you tell where it was once situated: and the greater regard is to be paid to Lucian's testimony, as he was a native of Samosata, a city upon the river Euphrates; and coming from a neighbouring country, he must have known whether there had been any remains of Nineveh or not. There is a city at this time called Mosul, situate upon the western side of the Tigris; and on the opposite eastern shore are ruins of a great extent, which are said to be those of Nineveh. Benjamin of Tuleda, who wrote his itinerary in the year after Christ 1173, informs us, that there is only a bridge between Mosul and Nineveh; and, though the latter is laid waste, yet it has many streets and castles. Another writer in 1300 asserts, that Nineveh is totally laid waste; but that by the ruins which are still to be seen there, we may firmly believe that it was one of the greatest cities in the world. Dr. Prideaux, following Thevenot, observes, that Mosul is situated on the west side of the Tigris, where was anciently only a suburb of the old Nineveh; for the city itself stood on the east side of the river, where are to be seen some of its ruins of great extent even to this day. Tavernier also affirms, that, after crossing the Tigris, (which has a swift stream and whitish water, whereas the Euphrates runs slow, and is reddish,) you come to the ancient city of Nineveh, which is now a heap of rubbish only, for a league along the river, full of vaults and caverns. And Salmon in his account of Assyria says, that in this country the famous city of Nineveh once stood on the eastern banks of the Tigris opposite to the place where Mosul now stands; that there is nothing now to be seen but heaps of rubbish about a league along the river, which people imagine to be the remains of this vast city. But it is more than probable, that these ruins are the remains of the Persian Nineveh, and not the Assyrian: even the ruins of old Nineveh, as we may say, have been long ago ruined and destroyed: such an utter end has been made of it, and such is the truth of the divine predictions!

These extraordinary circumstances may strike the reader more strongly, by supposing only a parallel instance. Let us then suppose, that a person should come in the name of a prophet, preaching repentance to the people of this kingdom, or otherwise denouncing the destruction of the capital city within a few years;—*With an overflowing flood will God make an utter end of the place thereof: He will make an utter end: Its place may be sought, but it shall never be found*. I presume we should look upon such prophet as a madman, and shew no farther attention to his message, than to deride and despise it: and yet such an event would

not

19 *There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?*

not be more strange and incredible than the destruction and devastation of Nineveh; for Nineveh was much the larger, stronger, and older city of the two; and the Assyrian empire had subsisted and flourished more ages than any form of government in this country; so that there is no objecting the instability of the eastern monarchies in this case. Let us then, since this event would not be more improbable and extraordinary than the other, suppose again, that things should succeed according to the prediction; that the floods should arise, and the enemy should come; the city should be overthrown and broken down, be taken and pillaged, and destroyed so totally, that even the learned could not agree about the place where it was situated. What would be said or thought in such a case? Whoever of posterity should read and compare the prophecy and event together, must they not by such an illustrious instance be thoroughly convinced of the providence of God, and of the truth of his prophet, and be ready to acknowledge, *Verily this is the word which the LORD hath spoken; verily there is a God who judgeth the earth!* See Bishop Newton, vol. i. Dissert. 9. We may read, ver. 18. *Thy nobles lie still: Thy people, &c.*;—ver. 19. *There is no closing up thy fracture: Incurable is thy wound: All that hear thy history will clap hands, &c.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Where sin unrepented is found, there all the terrible woes of God are written against the guilty soul.

1. The sins of Nineveh are charged upon her. It is a *bloody city*; innocent blood was shed there with impunity, or by the unjust wars that her ambition waged against her neighbours: *full of lies*, where no honesty, truth, or fidelity was to be found; and *of robbery*, each preying on his neighbour, or on the nations around them; *the prey departeth not*, they never rest from plundering, nor think of making restitution to the injured: *her whoredoms were multiplied*, both carnal and spiritual: their idolatries notorious, their lewdness infamous; like a well-favoured harlot, she enticed the nations to learn her ways; and, being a *mistress of witchcrafts*, bound them as with magic spells to sell themselves to work wickedness; and, having brought them first under corporal bondage, afterwards enslaved their souls. *Note*; The charms of a harlot are like the spells of witchcraft, and issue in the destruction of body and soul.

2. Her judgment is read. The noise of the invading foe is heard; *the whip of the charioteer*, the *rattling of the wheels*, the *prancing of the horses*, the *jumping of the chariots*, sound terrible: *the bright sword* is unsheathed, the *glittering spear* is brandished, and so innumerable the multitude of the slain, that the very streets and ways are obstructed by them, and men *stumble* over them. Since God is her foe, she shall be stripped naked to her shame, deprived of all her wealth and power, exposed as a strumpet to the derision of those whom she had seduced, and

daubed with *abominable filth* and dung, *made vile* and contemptible, a *gazing-stock* of public reproach and infamy; every passenger, instead of affording the least kindness or compassion, shall shun her with abhorrence, and say, *Nineveh is laid waste*, pleased to proclaim the tidings, or astonished at the fearful change; *who will bemoan her?* she deserves no pity, that shewed none: *whence shall I seek comforters for thee?* the calamity is too great to admit of consolation; nor can any be found to discharge this friendly office to a city so universally detested. *Note*; (1.) They who in the day of their prosperity treated others with insolence, may expect, when they fall, to be trampled upon by every foot. (2.) The best-favoured harlot will shortly be a foul hag, hated and shunned by her former dearest paramours.

2dly, All the vain confidences of Nineveh are destroyed. She thought herself safe because of her greatness; but vain is her presumption. *Art thou better than populous No?* or Diospolis, in Egypt; a city, vast and full of inhabitants; fortified by art and nature, and situate in a place almost inaccessible to an enemy, supported by all the united forces of Egypt and Ethiopia, whose armies were immense, and helped by her confederates of Libya and Mauritania: yet with all these advantages No was destroyed, probably by Sennacherib; the inhabitants carried captives; the infants dashed in pieces against the stones by the inhuman soldiers; her honourable men divided by lot as slaves among the conquerors, and her nobles bound in chains. And if such a city fell so fearfully, the men of Nineveh ought not to be thus secure: the same treatment awaited them.

1. Their forces shall be dispirited, weakened, and destroyed, staggering like drunkards, effeminate, and terrified as women, flying to hide themselves, and seeking in vain help from others against their enemies: for, when God dispirits the host, the bravest turn cowards.

2. Their fortresses shall stand them in no stead. Though they take every precaution to repair the walls, to lay in provision, to place numerous garrisons therein, and assemble their whole force in order to oppose the invaders, yet *their strong-holds* shall fall as easily before the besiegers as a *ripe fig* when the tree is shaken; her gates shall be set wide open, the fire shall devour the bars, and with the sword shall their enemies consume, as the canker-worm, all the inhabitants of their cities, though numerous as the swarms of locusts.

3. Their friends shall desert them. The merchants, who once crowded the streets of Nineveh, and enriched themselves with the commerce there carried on, will no sooner behold the storm approaching, than with their wealth they will forsake the devoted city, and *fly away as the canker-worm* when the field is eaten up; and their auxiliaries and tributary kings, who in days of peace camped around them, and promised them assistance, no sooner feel the scorching sun of danger, than, like locusts, they take their flight and are heard of no more.

5

4. Their

4. Their princes and officers, the shepherds who should defend the flock, *slumber*, enervated with sloth and luxury, and asleep when they should be at their posts; or they sleep the sleep of death, and are laid with *the nobles in the dust*; while the people, as sheep without a shepherd, are scattered, and fall an easy prey to the enemy.

5. Their case is desperate, their *bruise* incurable, their *wound grievous*; the city and empire fall together at a

blow, never to be restored again. With triumph shall the oppressed nations *clap their hands* at the sound of their fall; *for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually*; having been oppressed, harassed, and plundered by the Assyrians, they will rejoice to see their destroyers destroyed. Let proud oppressors and hardened sinners tremble: their day shall come to fall; and heaven and earth shall exult in their destruction.

THE BOOK
OF THE
PROPHET HABAKKUK.

HABAKKUK is supposed to have been of the tribe of Simeon, and a native of Beth-zacar; and he is thought to have prophesied not long before the kingdom of Judah was destroyed, and at the same time with Jeremiab. He abode in Judæa while the rest of the Jews were in captivity at Babylon, which captivity he foretold; and died two years before the return of the Jews under Zerubbabel. The style of Habakkuk, says Bishop Lowth, is poetical; but particularly in his song or hymn, ch. iii. which may deservedly be looked upon as a master-piece in its kind. See his 21st Prelection, and Calmet.

C H A P. I.

Unto Habakkuk, complaining of the iniquity of the land, is shewed the fearful vengeance by the Chaldeans: he complaineth that vengeance should be executed by them who are far worse.

[Before Christ 690.]

THE burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.

2 O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! *even* cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!

3 Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause *me* to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence *are* before me: and there are *that* raise up strife and contention.

4 Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked

doth compass about the righteous: therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.

5 ¶ Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for *I* will work a work in your days *which* ye will not believe, though it be told *you*.

6 For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, *that* bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling-places *that are* not theirs.

7 They *are* terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves.

8 Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves, and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from

C H A P. I.

Ver. 1. The burden, &c.] The sentence, or prophesy. The prophet in the first four verses inveighs against the irregularities of Judah; and in the 6th verse he speaks of the coming of the Chaldeans into the country as of a thing entirely new; and as if those people had been called into existence for the very purpose of punishing the Jewish nation. See Calmet.

Ver. 3. And there are that raise up strife, &c.] And there is strife; and contention carries it.

VOL. IV.

Ver. 4. And judgment doth never go forth, &c.] And judgment goeth not forth to victory or perfection, for the wicked overbeareth the righteous. Houbigant. See Isai. xlii. 3.

Ver. 5. Behold ye, &c.—though it be told you] See and behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish; for, &c.—when it is told. Houbigant. So also the LXX, and Acts, xiii. 41.

Ver. 6. That bitter and hasty nation] That swift nation, which shall hasten its pace, and shall march, &c. Houbigant.

Ver. 7. Their judgment, &c.] They give to themselves their

far; they shall fly as the eagle *that* hasteth to eat.

9 They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up *as* the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity *as* the sand.

10 And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it.

11 Then shall *his* mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, *imputing* this his power unto his god.

12 ¶ *Art* thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction.

13 *Thou art* of purer eyes than to behold

evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, *and* holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth *the man that is* more righteous than he?

14 And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, *that have* no ruler over them?

15 They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag: therefore they rejoice and are glad.

16 Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion *is* fat, and their meat plenteous.

17 Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?

own judgments, and their own auguries. The meaning is, that the Chaldeans plunder whatever they deem in their own judgments proper to be theirs, and esteem their own will in the place of auguries and omens. Houbigant.

Ver. 9. Their faces shall sup, &c.] A burning wind goes before them, and gathers captives as the sand. Houbigant. They shall carry desolation, destruction, and fire every where before them. The winds which blew from Arabia the Desert were extremely hot, and very dangerous, not only on account of their own heat, but on account of the dust and sand which they brought with them. See Jer. iv. 11. xviii. 17. Ezek. xvii. 10. xix. 12.

Ver. 10. And they shall scoff, &c.] And he shall scoff at kings, and princes will be a jest with him; he will but laugh at every strong hold; for he will heap up the dust, (or raise a mound) and take it.

Ver. 11. Then, &c.] Then shall his spirit be changed, and he shall depart, and become guilty, who confided in his god. The prophet here foretels the wonderful change which was to happen to Nebuchadnezzar; who was to have the heart of a beast, and to become guilty; to be punished for his pride, to depart from his palace, and to dwell in the fields. See Houbigant.

Ver. 12. Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord] For thou, O Lord, my God, the holy God, the God of truth, thou hast of old ordained him to judgment: thou hast made him a strong enemy, that thou mightest correct him. Houbigant.

Ver. 14. And makest men, &c.] By delivering them to Nebuchadnezzar, who takes them in his net as a fisherman takes fishes. These creatures suffer themselves to be taken without resistance, because they have no power to defend themselves; no chief to conduct or guard them; *as reptiles, who have no protector or guardian.* The Hebrews give the common name of *reptiles* to all fishes. See Calmet.

Ver. 15. Therefore they rejoice and are glad] Therefore he rejoices and triumphs. The whole verse may be rendered in the singular number.

Ver. 16. Therefore, &c.] Therefore will he sacrifice to his net, and burn incense to his drag; because by them is his portion fat, and his meat delicious. The meaning is, that he attributes all his good success to his valour, his courage, his conduct, and good fortune; or else to that god, whose statue he erected in the plains of Dura. See Dan. iii. 1.

Ver. 17. Shall they therefore, &c.] Therefore he continually maketh his net empty [in order to be fed with that delicious food], and spareth not to slay the nations. Houbigant. Others render it, *Shall he therefore draw out his net, and that continually, to slay the nations, and without mercy?*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, This prophecy is called a burden, as it contains a heavy threatening of wrath for provoking iniquities.

1. The prophet bewails the miserable state of the land, where violence raged, iniquity reigned with impunity, rapine and injustice appeared without a veil; and while families and neighbours were set at variance by those who raise up strife and contention, the kingdom was torn with intestine divisions, fomented by the wicked, who loved to fish in these troubled waters. *The law is slackened*, has lost all its vigour; *and judgment doth never go forth* against the offenders, who are emboldened to commit every crime by this neglect: but, though the guilty escape, the innocent are persecuted; *for the wicked doth compass about the righteous*, confederate to oppress the few faithful, and pervert justice; *therefore wrong judgment proceedeth*; the just are condemned, while the criminals are acquitted. And when wickedness is thus prevalent in a nation, ruin cannot be far off.

2. The prophet bewails his own unhappy fate, condemned to dwell in the sight of such abominations, which grieved his righteous soul; and, though an importunate advocate with God, no answer was given him. *O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear? even cry unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!* Notwithstanding all his

C H A P. II.

Unto Habakkuk, waiting for an answer, is shewed that he must wait by faith. The judgment upon the Chaldeans for un-satiableness, for covetousness, for cruelty, for drunkenness, and for idolatry.

[Before Christ 690.]

I WILL stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see

what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd.

2 ¶ And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.

3 For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not

his prayers, no stop was put to the abounding ungodliness; and on this account he expostulates, lest it should seem as if the Lord had forsaken the earth, when wickedness thus prospered. *Note;* (1.) When we can do no more for sinners, it becomes us still to pray for them. (2.) Gracious souls, while they are in the world, must bear this burden, of seeing and hearing abominations which grieve their spirits: but yet a little while, and they shall be released, and go where the wicked cease from troubling. (3.) It has been a trial to many a good man's faith to behold prosperous iniquity; but we shall shortly see God justified in all his works and ways.

2dly, Though God bears long with the impenitent, he will not bear always.

1. He gives them notice of a terrible judgment ready to descend upon them. *Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, see what fearful work God is doing among them; and Israel's turn would shortly come; and wonder marvelously, astonished at the desolations which are wrought in the earth: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you;* which was the destruction of the Jewish nation, with their cities, and the temple at Jerusalem, which the Chaldeans, under the divine direction, would accomplish; and this within the present age; so that many then alive should see what the people of the Jews in general, notwithstanding all the prophetic warnings, treated as utterly incredible. The apostle applies this to the despisers of Christ and his Gospel, whose destruction, terrible and sure, approaches, notwithstanding their insensibility and presumption.

2. He describes the dreadful ravages which the Chaldeans should make among them. Raised up at God's call, and sent to execute his vengeance, they should come to seize by conquest the dwelling-places which are not theirs; and, among other victims to their ambition, Judæa shall be subdued by them. They are described as a *bitter and hasty nation*, cruel and merciless in their dispositions, inveterate in their enmities, and rapid in executing their enterprises: *they are terrible and dreadful;* the fame of their victories is spread, and their fierce look injects dismay into their enemies: *their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves;* their will is their rule, imperious in their commands, and strangers to the laws of clemency, equity, and humanity. *Their cavalry, swifter than the leopards, and more fierce than the evening wolves,* shall charge, pursue, and bear down all opposition, plundering and devouring the country, spreading themselves on every side, and hastening from their own distant land with such velocity as the eagle darteth on his prey. *They shall come all for violence, purely to ravage and spoil: their faces shall sup up as the east-wind, blasting all before them, leaving the land bare; or their*

faces shall look towards the east, designing to transfer their spoil and captives thither, which they collect innumerable as the sand. *They shall scoff at the kings of Judah, with their nobles and confederates; deriding every strong-hold,* as unable to resist their victorious arms: *for they shall heap dust and take it;* so easily will their mounts be raised by their numerous pioneers. *Then shall his mind change:* the king of Babylon, grown haughty by success, shall meditate new conquests; and he shall pass over all bounds of reason and equity, and shall offend by new acts of cruelty and injustice, *imputing this his power unto his god,* ascribing his success to his idol deities. Or the words may be understood as predicting Nebuchadnezzar's punishment. *His mind shall change* from a man to a beast, and he shall pass over from the society of men to dwell in the desert, and be punished for his pride and wickedness, for making *this his power his god,* as if he were a divinity, and possessed omnipotence. (See the Annotations.) *Note;* (1.) It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of despotic tyrants. (2.) Success often ministers fuel for pride; and many by prosperity have their minds changed for the worse.

3dly, The judgments ready to come upon the people distressed the prophet, as their sins had done before; seeing that the righteous, as well as the wicked, would be involved therein; he therefore flies to God in prayer, and expostulates with him on these afflictive dispensations, that he may obtain an answer to satisfy his own mind, and those who, like him, approved still their fidelity to God.

1. He professes his own unshaken faith in God, under every circumstance of distress and difficulty. *Art thou not from everlasting? thou art the same unchangeable Jehovah; O Lord, my God, in whose favour he had an assured interest; mine holy One, whose dispensations, however dark to us, are perfectly righteous and true; who is holy essentially, and the author of all holiness to others: we shall not die; however threatening the judgments, the nation shall not utterly be extirpated: though the Chaldeans threatened high, they were but instruments in God's hand: O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment, to punish the wicked, O mighty God, whose power can overrule all the purposes of men; thou hast established them for correction; to destroy the impenitent from the face of the earth, and to chasten thy children for good, that they may not be delivered unto death; this being the gracious design of God in all the afflictions that he sends upon genuine believers, and which should be their comfort under them. Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity; not that God's eye is not in every place; but he doth not approve of wickedness, it is his abhorrence; nor can he see the afflictions of his believing people, and the iniquity of their oppressors, with connivance or satisfaction; and to these*

lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.

4 Behold, his soul *which* is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

5 ¶ Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, *he is* a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and *is* as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people:

6 Shall not all these take up a parable against

him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Woe to him that increaseth *that which is* not his! how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay!

7 Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them?

8 Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; because of men's blood, and *for* the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.

principles he resolved to adhere, however appearances might seem to contradict them. *Note;* (1.) Sound and well-established principles are the great support in time of trial. (2.) God's permission of wickedness does not imply his approbation; nor is the evil that he suffers his believing people to undergo any mark of his displeasure; but contrariwise, because they are sons, he chastiseth them with the rod of men.

2. He begs a solution of his difficulties under the present distressful scene before him, when piety was oppressed, and wickedness triumphant: *wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously*, giving them success in their perfidious designs, and *holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?* as the Chaldeans did the Jews; and God's silence distressed the prophet and other good men, how to reconcile this with their general principles; because they did not sufficiently look to that great day of retribution, when every thing shall be fully balanced. *And makest men as the fishes of the sea*; seeming to shew no more care towards men in general, and his own people in particular, than over the fishes, where the weaker are a prey to the strong, and whoever will may take them in their net, *as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them to protect and defend them.* Thus helpless were they before their enemies, as if God had forsaken the earth, and left the good a prey to the wicked, and the weak a spoil to the strong; to be caught as easily as fish *with the angle*; and by a variety of means, by the net or drag, to be seized and destroyed without concern: yea, to be a sport and pastime to their murderers, as fishermen *rejoice and are glad* when their net is filled. *Therefore they sacrifice to their own net, and burn incense unto their own drag*, applaud themselves in their own contrivances, and the success of them, *because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plentiful*; they thus enlarged their wealth, and were enabled to live more luxuriously; and this was their happiness. *Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?* shall they go on successfully from nation to nation, murdering and plundering at their pleasure? Will a righteous God permit this? he leaves the matter with the Lord, and in faith and hope is emboldened to expect his interposition. *Note;* (1.) Whatever difficulties occur in the divine providence, we must cast our care upon God, and wait patiently for his salvation. (2.) Ambitious princes make no more account of men than of fishes, and

rejoice in battles gained at the expence of multitudes of lives; but God will reckon such conquerors as the most bloody murderers of mankind.

CHAP. II.

Ver. 1. I will stand upon my watch, &c.] I stood upon my watch, and continued upon the tower; and I looked to see what the Lord would say unto me, and what he would answer to my expostulation: [namely, that in the 13th and following verses of the preceding chapter, respecting the prosperity of the wicked, and of Nebuchadnezzar particularly:] *Ver. 2. When the Lord answered me, &c.* not shortly and enigmatically, as in ver. 11. of the former chapter, but openly and fully, denouncing the punishment of Nebuchadnezzar's impiety.

Ver. 3. At the end it shall speak, &c.] At the end he shall break forth, and not deceive: Though he delay, expect him; because he that cometh will come, he will not tarry.

Ver. 4. Behold, his soul, &c.] Behold, if any one draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him, &c. Houbigant however renders it, *But if any one shall withdraw himself, his soul shall not overcome: but he who shall be constant [or firm in his reliance] shall live by his faith.* It is the same admonition which we frequently read in Jeremiah, that if any one upon the taking of Jerusalem should withdraw himself and flee into Egypt, to escape the Chaldeans, it should not turn out prosperously to him; while they should be in safety, who, after the destruction of Jerusalem, should remain in Judæa, and continue to cultivate the lands. See Houbigant. When we come to the Epistle to the Hebrews, we shall examine in what sense this passage is quoted there.

Ver. 5, 6. Yea, also, &c.] A transgressor by wine, is quite foreign to the subject; nor do the Syriac, LXX, or Arabic mention any thing of it. Houbigant renders the verse, very agreeably to the context, thus, *For he, though he is a despiser, and powerful, and proud, yet shall he not have rest. After he shall have enlarged his desire as the grave, and as death, he shall not be satisfied; and after he shall have gathered to him all nations, and have heaped unto him all people.* *Ver. 6. For all these things they shall take up a parable, &c.—Woe to him who hath heaped together those things which were not his; and hath made his chain more thick and heavy; "has increased his power and majesty by his rapine and plunder."* See his note, and the LXX.

Ver. 8. For the violence, &c.] And violence done to the land, to the city, and to all the inhabitants thereof.

Ver.

9 ¶ Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil!

10 Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned against thy soul.

11 For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.

12 ¶ Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity!

13 Behold, *is it* not of the LORD of Hosts, that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?

14 For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

15 ¶ Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that puttest thy bottle to *him*, and makest *him* drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!

16 Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered: the cup of the LORD's right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing shall be on thy glory.

17 For the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee, and the spoil of beasts, *which* made them afraid, because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.

18 ¶ What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it? the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols?

19 Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it *is* laid over with gold and silver, and *there is* no breath at all in the midst of it.

20 But the LORD *is* in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.

Ver. 9. That he may set his nest on high] Who setteth his nest on high, that he may be delivered from evil; or be exempted, or secured from the reach of evil; that is to say, from the destruction of his city and empire, which the prophets of Israel, who were captives in his kingdom, denounced.

Ver. 11. For the stone shall cry, &c.] The answer of the beam follows in the next verse. The meaning of these figurative expressions is, that the houses and towns which have been destroyed by the Chaldeans shall cry for vengeance against the destroyers.

Ver. 13. Behold, is it not, &c.] For certainly this is from the Lord of Hosts, that the people shall take pains for the fire, and the nations shall weary themselves, &c. Houbigant.

Ver. 14. For the earth shall be filled, &c.] Or, "Shall have a full and perfect knowledge of the glory of the Lord, when Babylon shall be overthrown;" because the prophets of the Lord had foretold that destruction. God's providence in governing the world, shall conspicuously appear in the downfall of the Babylonish empire; especially as it is described in the prophets, as an earnest and type of the fall of the mystical Babylon; which will be a decisive stroke, that will thoroughly vindicate oppressed truth and innocence. See Lowth.

Ver. 15. Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink] By this neighbour, the neighbouring nations seem to be meant; whom the Chaldeans, as Grotius observes, enticed into their alliance, that they might afterwards treat them in the most ignominious manner. This particularly was the case of the king of Egypt, of whom Calmet more immediately understands it.

Ver. 16. Thou art filled with shame, &c.] Drink thou also, till thou art filled with shame instead of glory; and let, &c.

For the cup of the right hand of the Lord shall come round to thee, &c. And disgrace shall succeed to thy glory. Houbigant.

Ver. 17. For the violence of Lebanon] For upon thee shall be returned the violences done in Lebanon, and the spoil of cattle, and whatever shall remain of human blood, and of the spoils of the land, &c. Houbigant. See ver. 8.

Ver. 18. What profiteth the graven image] What, &c. when the maker thereof hath graven it? The molten image, and the doctrine of lies that he who hath formed it may have hope therein, while he maketh dumb idols? Houbigant. The prophet speaks here against idols in general, and idolatrous princes. What will they avail Nebuchadnezzar, and others like him, in the day of danger, and when the Lord ariseth to take vengeance upon them?

Ver. 19. It shall teach] Can this thing give instruction?—Behold, &c. but no breath at all in it. Houbigant, however; renders it, Wilt thou have that for an instructor, which, covered over with gold and silver, hath no breath in it?

Ver. 20. But the Lord, &c.] "The God of Israel is not like these imaginary deities: he gives law to all the earth; and all creatures ought to continue in silence with the most profound adoration and respect before his tremendous presence: he is the sovereign arbiter of their life and their death; of their destruction and their preservation." By his holy temple, is meant the heaven. Silence is a mark of respect and submission. In the eastern courts, there reigns among the guards, officers, and great men, attendant upon their princes, the most profound silence, in a grave, composed, and immoveable posture, which gives us some idea of the silence whereof Habakkuk speaks. Lord Baltimore, in his tour to the East, mentions a particular which will illustrate what has gone before. He informs us, that

C H A P. III.

Habakkuk in his prayer trembleth at God's majesty. The confidence of his faith.

[Before Christ 690.]

A PRAYER of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth.

2 O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and

that at the feast of the great Biram at Constantinople, the Grand Signor goes to the mosque of Sultan Ahmed. The cavalcade which issues forth from the Seraglio, on this occasion, is one of the finest sights in Europe. It consists of the vizirs, bashaws, grandees, and all the principal civil and military persons in the city, who go to pay their respects to their emperor. They begin to come out at four o'clock in the morning, and continue so doing till about nine. When the Grand Signor appears, a deep silence is observed. The Janissaries line the streets from the palace to the mosque; they are without any sort of arms; they stand with their hands across, and bow down to the Grand Signor and to the vizirs only, who return the salute:—but how infinitely more worthy of reverence is the great JEHOVAH!

REFLECTIONS.—Ist, We have here,

1. The prophet waiting in faith for an answer to his prayer. *I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, as a watchman waiting for intelligence; and will watch to see what he will say unto me, with regard to the requests that he had made, and the difficulties that he was under; and what I shall answer when I am reproved, either for the boldness of his expostulations; or how he should silence the objections of others, who might, from these melancholy appearances, argue against the providence of God.* Note; (1.) When we are in perplexity, and know not how to reconcile God's providences with his promises, we must go up to the tower of prayer and meditation, and stand our ground there by faith against the assaults of temptation, looking to God for an answer of peace. (2.) When we have been with God in prayer, consulting his word, or reflecting on his dispensations, we must observe what God *speaks unto us* by any of these means, for our conviction, direction, encouragement, or consolation.

2. God answers him in mercy, and shews him the destruction of these merciless ravagers: for he never disappoints the expectations of his waiting people. For the comfort of the pious, he is commanded to *write the vision*, that it may be preserved, and handed down, unadulterated by tradition; and *make it plain upon tables*, which were then used for writing, and covered with wax, on which the letters were impressed; and this was to be done very plainly, and hung up in some conspicuous place, *that he may run that readeth it*, so legible that it might be easily read even by the most cursory look, or as one ran by it and but turned his head that way. And such should our preaching be, that the meanest capacities may comprehend it, never wishing to be admired as orators, but using all plainness of speech, that God's word may be understood. *For the vision is yet for an appointed time*; though it be distant, the day of its

was afraid; O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.

3 ¶ God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.

accomplishment is sure: *at the end it shall speak, and not lie*; the Lord will not disappoint the faith and patience of his believing people; or *he will speak*, who is the faithful and true witness, the prophet come to lead us into all truth. *Though it*, the promise, or *He*, the Messiah, *tarry long*; or at least seem to do so to those who longed for his appearing; *wait for it*, or *Him*, the fulfilment of the promise, or the coming of the Lord; *because it will surely come, it will not tarry*; or, *for he that shall come, will come*, as the apostle quotes the words, Heb. x. 37. applying them to the Lord Jesus, the great hope of his people, on whom they are called to stay themselves under every afflictive dispensation. And herein the truth of grace is to be proved. *Behold, his soul, which is lifted up, is not upright in him*: they who despise the vision, or distrust the promise, and, instead of waiting upon God, endeavour to shift for themselves, depending on their own devices, they shew the unsoundness of their hearts. *But the just shall live by faith*: they who trusted God, even in the midst of their calamities, should be preserved; and in their captivity, the expectation of the Messiah should support them; and by persevering faith alone they could be saved. The words are quoted thrice by the Apostle as a proof of the great doctrine of justification by faith only; and they teach us, (1.) That no man is justified before God, by any doings or duties of his own, but by faith in Jesus. (2.) The meritorious cause of our life of grace or glory is not our faith, but the object of it, Christ Jesus—his righteous obedience unto the death of the cross.

2dly, Some commentators, supposing from the first part of this chapter which refers to Gospel-times, that the latter part goes on to describe the character of the succeeding enemies of the church, apply it to the Roman people, and especially their emperors, to whom no doubt the prophecy is very applicable; but I rather incline, with the generality, to refer it to Nebuchadnezzar and his successors in the Babylonian monarchy. See the Annotations.

1. Most heavy accusations are laid against this enemy of God's people: drunkenness and sensuality; impious pride, even to expect adoration; covetousness insatiable, injustice and oppression, the blood of innocents; ambition which knew no bounds; these and the like were the crimes with which he stood chargeable before God. Therefore,

2. Repeated woes are denounced upon him; and, when he is fallen, he will be justly insulted by those nations over whom he lorded it before. *Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb*, pleased to behold his disgrace, and deriding his pride and presumption, and say, *Woe, woe, woe unto him?*

[1.] *Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his, oppressing and plundering to increase his wealth: how long shall*

4 And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power.

5 Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet.

6 He stood, and measured the earth: he

shall iniquity thus prevail, and the unrighteous prosper? and to him that loadeth himself with thick clay, the riches of the world being no better: and they who lade themselves with these by carking care and injustice, bring a heavy burden upon their souls, which will sink them into perdition and destruction. *Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee?* certainly they shall. The Persians and the Medes will spoil him of the thick clay on which he doated; and thou shalt be for booties unto them. As he spoiled others, so shall they spoil him, the just retaliation for the innocent blood which he had shed, the violence that he had committed, and the cities that he had destroyed, whose inhabitants he plundered. God keeps a strict account, and in the dreadful day of judgment the black catalogue will be produced against the proud oppressor and daring sinner, to his everlasting confusion.

[2.] *Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, insatiable after wealth, and ever grasping at more: for covetousness brings its own curse along with it, and cannot be satisfied, robbing men of all the comforts in their families which they otherwise might have enjoyed: that he may set his nest on high, raise his family to higher honour and dignity in the world; that he may be delivered from the power of evil, secured from the power of his enemies, the great evil that he dreads; though, alas! these are vain pretexes to gloss over his covetousness; and his defences but feeble against the evils that he fears. Thou hast consulted shame to thy house, by cutting off many people, fixing, by such unjust and cruel conduct, a mark of indelible infamy on his family; and hast sinned against thy soul, exposing it to God's wrath and damnation: for the stone shall cry out of the wall, if other witnesses of his guilt are wanting, and his frauds and deceits have been so managed as to escape the eye of men; and the beam out of the timber shall answer it, calling for vengeance upon the head of the unjust and the oppressor.*

[3.] *Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity, as Nebuchadnezzar had built or adorned Babylon with the spoils of conquered nations. Behold, is it not of the Lord of Hosts, that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity? so fruitless will be all the endeavours of the Babylonians to preserve themselves from their enemies. For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea—when in the fall of Babylon God will be glorified, and the fame of his judgments spread into all lands. And this verse seems to look forward also to greater events than the fall of Babylon, even to the times of the Gospel, when the kingdom of darkness shall fall before the word of Jesus, and the knowledge of his glory be diffused, till at last, by his power and grace, the very ends of the earth shall remember themselves and be turned to the Lord, and all flesh shall see the salvation of our God.*

3dly, The prophet, having given us an awful description

of the woes denounced on account of oppression and wrong, proceeds to shew two other causes for these woes, namely, drunkenness and idolatry.

1. *Drunkenness.* *Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, as Belshazzar did, when he made a feast for his thousand lords, Dan. v. 1. that putteth thy bottle to him, urging him to drink; and makest him drunken also.* Such are factors for hell, and enemies to mankind; and though it may be called hospitality, good cheer, and giving them a hearty welcome, thus to make the glass circulate, it is indeed among the most deadly wickednesses, and will provoke the heaviest wrath of God. *Woe unto the drunkards from the palace to the cottage! wrath is gone forth against them: that thou mayest look on their nakedness; draw out their secrets, expose them to ridicule, or induce them to some foolish or indiscreet act or bargain; this being the malignant view for which men often ply their neighbours with liquor; but God will be the avenger of all such. Thou art filled with shame for glory; God will render such persons vile and abhorred; drink thou also; a cup of wrath is put into his hands; the cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned unto thee.* The same vengeance which the Chaldeans had executed upon others shall return upon their own heads, when they shall be stripped naked to their shame, and, like drunkards, shameful spearing shall be on thy glory; they shall be rendered contemptible and loathsome, and all their riches and greatness be spoiled and defiled. *The violence of Lebanon shall cover thee; either the same destruction as they had made in the temple of God; or this should rise up in judgment against them; or they should be hunted down as wild beasts in Lebanon: the spoil of beasts which made them afraid; once the terror of the country, but now destroyed; and this for the reasons alleged before, because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.*

Many apply this to Babylon mystical, the great whore that maketh all nations drunk with the wine of her fornication, whose end will be according to her works; see Rev. xviii. 3—6.

2. *Idolatry.* Babylon was full of idols; but all the gold and silver lavished upon them, or the curious sculpture, profited the maker nothing at all. Though they cried before them, *Arise to help us, and expected from them directions in their emergencies; yet it was folly, nay, madness, to expect a dumb stone, a lifeless log, to teach or awake to succour them.* Such expectations could only be raised by the great teacher of lies, whom these idols effectually serve; and nothing but woe can be the consequence of trusting in these lying vanities. Babylon mystical, the church of Rome, copies close after her pattern in ancient days, and has multiplied her images of gold and silver, of the Trinity, the Saviour, the Virgin Mary, of saints and angels, crowding their churches with them; where miserable devotees are seen continually kneeling before the breathless image or dumb stone. Their crafty priests, indeed, represent these as *laymen's books*; but God regards them

beheld, and drove afunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the

perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting.

them with abomination, as *teachers of lies*. But the Lord is in his holy temple; not in idols of wood, or stone, or gold, but in heaven, beholding the hearts and ways of all the children of men; and in his church, where his special presence resides, comforting his believing people, and protecting them from their enemies. *Let all the earth keep silence before him*, paying him the worship due unto his name with reverence and godly fear, and never more ascribing his honour to graven images.

CHAP. III.

Ver. 1, 2. A prayer of Habakkuk [שִׁיגִיּוֹת *Shigionoth* signifies wanderings. This word of the prophet seems to relate both to the deviations of the Jewish people from God's law, and also to their wandering, or being removed from their land on that account. Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion, render the word ἀγνοματων ignorances. So the Vulgate ignorantiss. See Parkhurst on the word שִׁיגִיּוֹת. Habakkuk having been informed by God of his design to send the Jews into captivity for their sins, and of his determination that they should serve the Babylonians seventy years, took upon him, as became his office, to intercede with God on their behalf. He begins his prayer for them with laying before the Lord, ver. 2. the distress into which he was thrown by the judgments denounced against them; beseeching him, that he would shorten the time determined for their captivity, and restore them to their country before it was expired. Mr. Green renders the verse,

"O Jehovah, I have heard thy report:" (that is to say, what thou hast revealed concerning the captivity.)

"I am in pain, O Jehovah, for thy work:" (that is to say, for all that he had done among the Jews, and among other nations by means of the Jews, for the honour of his great Name.)

"In the midst of the years revive it;" (that is to say, restore the Jews to their own land, before the years determined for their captivity are expired. See Psa. lxxxv. 6, 7.)

"In the midst of the years shew compassion."

"In wrath remember mercy." See his new version of this chapter.

Ver. 3. God came from Teman] The prophet, having offered up his petition for shortening the captivity, proceeds in the next place, from ver. 3 to 16. to recount the wonderful works which Jehovah had formerly wrought, to deliver his people from Egyptian slavery, and to put them in possession of the land of Canaan; intimating by this, that he would, in his good time, shew himself equally powerful in delivering them from the Babylonish captivity, and restoring them to their own land. In recounting these wonderful works Habakkuk first exhibits a description of Jehovah, as king and commander of the ten thousands of Israel, marching at their head in a pillar of a cloud, to conduct them and put them in possession of the promised land. When Jehovah sets out from Teman and Paran, so great is the majesty and glory with which he is arrayed, that the heaven and the earth are too little to contain them, ver. 3.

His brightness, like that of the meridian sun, is insupportable, and his power irresistible; ver. 4. the pestilence and devouring fire attending him, to do execution upon the enemy at his command; ver. 5. As soon as he enters the land of Canaan, ver. 6. he takes possession of it as rightful Lord; and the seven nations, conscious that they had forfeited it by their wickedness, fly at the sight of him. The mountains of the land disperse to make way for him; the hills bow to pay him obeisance; and the highways own him for their Lord; and so great is the dread of him, that the neighbouring nations tremble while he passes by: ver. 7. See Green: who, instead of, *The earth was full of his praise*, reads, *And his glory filled the earth*. Bishop Lowth observes, that this chapter affords us a remarkable instance of that sublimity which is peculiar to the *ode*; and which is principally owing to a bold and yet easy digression or transition. The prophet foreseeing the judgments of God, the calamities which were to be brought upon his countrymen by the Chaldeans, and then the punishments which awaited the Chaldeans themselves; partly struck with terror, partly revived with hope and confidence in the divine mercy, he prays God that he would hasten the redemption and deliverance of his people, ver. 3. Now, here immediately occurs to every one's mind a similitude between the Babylonish and Egyptian captivity; that it was possible that an equal deliverance might be procured by the help of God; and how aptly the prophet might have so continued his prayer, that God, who had wrought so many miracles in ancient days for the sake of his people, would likewise continue his providential regard towards them; and how much it would contribute to confirm and strengthen the minds of the good, who should remember that the God who formerly had manifested his infinite power in rescuing the Israelites out of such great calamities, was able to do the same, by avenging their posterity likewise. But the prophet has omitted all these topics, for this very reason, because they so readily occur to the mind; and, instead of expatiating in so large a field, he bursts forth with an unexpected impetuosity, *God came from Teman*, &c. Throughout the whole passage he preserves the same magnificence with which he begins; choosing the noblest images that so copious a subject could afford, and illustrating them with the most splendid colours; images, figures, and the most elevated style. What crowns the sublimity of this piece, is, the singular elegance of the close; and were it not that antiquity has here and there thrown its veil of obscurity over it, there could not be conceived a more perfect and masterly poem of the kind. See the 28th Prelection.

Ver. 4. And his brightness was as the light] Green renders this verse thus:

His brightness was as the brightness of the sun;
He had rays of light beaming from his hand.

(See Deut. xxxiii. 2.)

And there was the hiding-place of his power. As the cloud was a hiding-place or veil to the glory of Jehovah, when it did not shine forth; so was it considered as the hiding-place of his power, when not manifested in act.

7 I saw the tents of Cushman in affliction : and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.

8 Was the LORD displeased against the rivers? *was* thine anger against the rivers?

was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses and thy chariots of salvation?

9 Thy bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, *even thy*

21. See Numb. xvi. 42, 46. Dr. Kennicott would render the verse, *His brightness was as the sun; the splendours issuing from his hand; for there was the manifestation of his power.* As the Hebrew word אור *our*, here rendered *light*, is rendered in Job, xxxi. 26. *the sun*; (which being the principal source of *light*, through this system, may be properly called *light*, or *the light*, by way of eminence;) that rendering seems to improve the sense here. As קרנים *karnaim*, is derived from קרן *karan*, to *shine*, or emit rays of light, it is much better rendered *splendours* than *horns*: see Parkhurst on the word. And as the *hand*, *right-hand*, and *arm*, are expressions applied to God upon any signal display of the divine power; perhaps the *hand of God* cannot so properly be said to *hide* and *conceal*, as to *exert* and *manifest* his power and majesty: and that the verb whence the noun חביון *chebion*, is derived, gives this idea of *sheaving forth*, is evident from several places in the Samaritan versions; as Gen. xli. 25, &c. In this illustrious passage, then, we see the brightness or splendour poetically represented as streaming from the hand of God; that awful hand, which is mighty in operation, and which has so often manifested the divine power to a wondering world. See Kennicott's Dissert. vol. i. p. 428.

Ver. 5. *Before him went the pestilence*] See Ezek. xx. 47. Houbigant, supposing this to refer to God's appearance on mount Sinai, instead of *pestilence*, which he thinks ill suited to the subject, renders the word דבר *daber*, *commandment*, as the LXX, λογος, or *Word*; referring to the ten commandments which God promulged when *the fire went forth at his feet*. But, taking the passage as explained on ver. 3. *pestilence* is very proper; and the word rendered *burning coals*, would more justly be translated *devouring fire*, or *lightning*. See Psal. l. 3. lxxviii. 48.

Ver. 6. *He stood and measured the earth*] *He stood, and measured out the land; he beheld, and scattered the nations: The eternal mountains dispersed, the perpetual hills bowed; the everlasting ways owned their Lord.* Green; who observes, that it was customary for a conqueror, as soon as he became possessed of a country, to measure it out, and divide it among his people; thus David, *I will triumph and divide Sichem, and measure out the valley of Succoth*. Hence Jehovah, who takes possession of the land of Canaan upon the flight and cession of its guilty inhabitants, is represented as dividing it among the tribes of Israel. This passage is extremely poetical; wherein not only the inhabitants of Canaan, but the land itself is represented as struck with conscious terror at the approach of Jehovah. The Hebrew לו *lo*, is translated *owned their Lord*, because the literal sense of it, *were for him, or on his side*, amounts to the same.

Ver. 7. *I saw the tents of Cushman in affliction*] *I saw the tents of Cushman, or of Ethiopia, in consternation, and the tent curtains of the land of Midian trembled.* Since Moses's wife,

who was a Midianite, is called Numb. xii. 1. a *Cushite* (that is, *Ethiopian*), *Cushman* may be here another name for *Midian*; and then the two members of this period will be equivalent: but if it should be different, then it must mean an Arabian nation which dwelt in tents near *Midian*, and which was seized with the same consternation at the approach of Jehovah as they were. We can never sufficiently admire the strength and spirit, as well as justness and propriety, of the foregoing description. The design of the prophet was, to give us right conceptions of Jehovah, as king and commander of the ten thousands of Israel; and what more proper circumstances could he have chosen, to inspire us with a just idea of his magnificence and greatness on this occasion? The glory with which he is arrayed is such as filleth the heaven and the earth: a glory which arises not from the pomp of external grandeur, and the parade of honourable followers; but from himself. His power is the terror of all the world around him: the insignia of it being, not the *sword* or the *fasces*, but the *pestilence* and *devouring fire*: and so great is the dread of him, that the Canaanites fly at his approach, the land trembles at his presence, and the nations around are not able to hide their dismay. Such is Habakkuk's description of Jehovah, simple and plain, but yet grand and sublime; as much excelling every pagan description of Jupiter, as light surpasses darkness. See Green and Houbigant. Ver. 8. After the description of Jehovah given in the preceding verses, the first of his wonderful works recounted by the prophet is the passage through the Red Sea, where he represents the Lord as appearing at the head of the Israelites in his chariot of war; with his bow drawn in his hand, to rescue them from their cruel oppressors, the Egyptians, and to give them the land of Canaan, according to the oath which he swore unto them, ver. 8, 9. The next is, his giving them water to drink in the wilderness, where the mountains moved at his presence:—part of ver. 9, 10. The next, his passage over Jordan, where the waters, testifying their ready obedience to his will, open to the right and left to make way for his people to pass through:—latter part of ver. 10. The next, his interposition at Joshua's engagements with the Amorites, when the sun and moon stood still, to give them time to discomfit their enemies, ver. 11. The last wonderful works which the prophet recounts were performed after this engagement, when Jehovah marched before them to execute vengeance on the Canaanites, ver. 12. and to protect the Israelites; destroying utterly the princes of Canaan and their states, at a time when they made sure of Israel for their prey, ver. 13, 14. and giving his own people entire possession of their country, from the river Jordan on the east, to the Mediterranean Sea on the west, ver. 15. See Green.

Ver. 8, 9. *Was the Lord displeased against the rivers?* That

word. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers.

10 The mountains saw thee, *and* they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, *and* lifted up his hands on high.

11 The sun *and* moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, *and* at the shining of thy glittering spear.

12 Thou didst march through the land in

indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen in anger.

13 Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, *even* for salvation with thine anointed; thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah.

14 Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages: they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing *was* as to devour the poor secretly.

That is, "When thou appearedst, O Jehovah, at the Red Sea, in thy chariot of war, with thy bow drawn in thy hand, was it that thou wast displeased with the sea?"—The answer follows in the next verse, "No; *Thou layedst bare thy bow, to fight for Israel, according to thy oath unto the tribes, and thy promise.* It was only to fight for Israel, and conduct them safe to the land of Canaan, according to the oath which thou hadst given them." See Deut. xxxiii. 26. Psal. lxxvii. 17, 18. The meaning of *Riding upon thine horses, and thy chariots*, must be *on thy chariots drawn by horses*; because in the original it is not *thy horses, and thy chariots*, the connective particle *and* being a supplement of our translators; but, *upon thy horses, thy chariots*; that is to say, *even on thy chariots drawn by horses*. The remark of Grotius here is, "Being drawn by thy horses, thy chariots brought salvation; clouds, storms, and tempests, being the chariots of God in the sacred writings." And where it is added, ver. 15. *Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses*, the meaning must be, that God made the passage of the Red Sea so easy, that it might have been passed through by an army of horse without any interruption; in plain allusion to the chariots and horses of the Egyptians. See Chandler's Life of David, vol. ii. p. 184. and the note on Psal. xviii. 10. Houbigant, after several commentators, reads the second clause of the 9th verse, *And thou hast satiated the arrows of thy quiver*. See his note, and the Syriac translation.

Ver. 9, 10. *Thou didst cleave the earth, &c.*] The 10th verse should certainly begin with this clause, where the prophet begins a new subject. Green renders it,

Thou cleavedst the dry land into rivers.

Ver. 10. The mountains saw thee, and were in pangs: see Psal. lxxvii. 16. cxiv. 4.

Ver. 10. *The overflowing, &c.*] *The overflowing water passed away*. Green. At the season when the Israelites passed over Jordan, this river overflowed its banks; but as soon as the priests who bare the ark entered into it, the waters which came down above rearing themselves, the river parted asunder with a mighty noise; here nobly described by the deep uttering its voice, and lifting up its hands on high. See Josh. iii. 15, 16.

Ver. 11. *At the light of thine arrows they went*] *By their light thine arrows fled abroad, and by their shinings thy glittering spear*. When Joshua fought against the Amorites, at his command the sun and moon stood still, to give the Israelites time for the destruction of their enemies; and

while these gave them light, *Jehovah sent out his arrows and scattered them. He shot forth his lightnings and destroyed them*. The verb *הלך* *halak* rendered *went*, or *flew abroad*, signifies any progressive motion, and should always be translated by such a word as best suits the subject. When used of ships, it should be translated *sailing*; when of rivers, *running*; when of any thing that moves upon wings, *flying*, as it should be rendered Psal. civ. 3. *Who flieth upon the wings of the wind*. Hervey paraphrases this, according to the marginal translation of our Bibles, "In the light, thine arrows walked on their lawful errand; in the clear-shining of the day, lengthened out for this purpose, thy glittering spear, launched by thy people, but guided by thy hand, sprung on its prey." See Green.

Ver. 12. *Thou didst march, &c.*] Jehovah is here represented as marching before his people through the land of Canaan, in his chariot of war, and trampling under foot those that rise up against him. The second clause should be rendered, *Thou didst trample under foot the nations in anger*. It is the same figurative language in which David speaks of him, Psal. lx. 12.

Ver. 13. *Even for salvation with thine anointed*] *For the salvation of thine anointed. Thou woundedst the head of the house of the wicked; thou rasedst the foundations even to the rock*. Ver. 14. *Thou piercedst through with thy sceptre the head of the villages*. Green. The persons who are said in this passage to be *wounded*, and *pierced through*, were some of the kings of Canaan; but which of them are meant, the history of Joshua is not particular enough to inform us.

Ver. 14. *Thou didst strike, &c.*] Green, as we have seen in the former note, joins this clause to the 13th verse. Houbigant reads it thus, *Thou with thy sceptre didst strike through the head of his princes, who rushed forth with violence to destroy me, and who rejoiced like those who are about to devour the poor secretly*. Green reads the latter part of the verse, *When they came out as a whirlwind to scatter us, their rejoicing was as when about to devour the poor man in secret*. When the kings of Canaan had recovered their spirits, they entered into a confederacy against the Israelites, and set upon them in battle with such fury, as if they would have swept them away, like a stormy wind. Our whirlwind gives us but a faint idea of the scorching wind of the East, which was frequently employed as an instrument of divine vengeance, and brought with it certain destruction. See Job, xxvii. 21. Jer. xxiii. 19. xxx. 23. The reader will observe, that,

15 Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, *through* the heap of great waters.

16 When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops.

17 ¶ Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour

of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and *there shall be* no herd in the stalls:

18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

19 The LORD God *is* my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.

that, in this and the seventh verse, the prophet speaks in the person of an Israelite, who lived in the days of Joshua. In the 18th and 19th verses we find him speaking in the person of a captive Jew at Babylon. He does the former to give life to his poetry; the latter, to give confidence to the Jewish people. See Green.

Ver. 15. *Thou didst walk through the sea*] See the note on ver. 8, 9. where an exposition of this verse is given: but Green understands it very differently, thus,

Thou marchedst with thine horses to the western sea,
To the heap of great waters.

¶ *iam*, says he, is frequently put by way of eminence, for the *Western*, or *Mediterranean Sea*. Now, as the Israelites entered the land of promise on the east, it is more probably the meaning of the prophet that Jehovah marched before them to give them possession of the whole land, even to the west, than that, after so many incidents mentioned by him since their passage through the Red Sea, he should return to speak of that again: but let every one judge for himself.

Ver. 16. *When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered, &c.*] The prophet, having recounted, for the present encouragement of the faithful, the wonderful works which God had formerly done for his people, returns again to set forth in what manner he was affected with the judgments pronounced against them; and thence takes occasion to pray that he might be gathered to his fathers in peace, before the king of Babylon should invade Judæa, and carry the people away captive, ver. 16.; adding, as a reason for his prayer, a description of the desolation which should then come upon the land, ver. 17. After this he concludes his prayer for the Jews with declaring, that whatever became of himself, he would still rejoice in hope, that God would visit his people again with his salvation, ver. 18. And then, glorying in Jehovah as their strength, the prophet rests assured that he would in due time restore the captive Jews to their own land; giving them the agility of the hind, to return once more to the fertile and darling hills of Judæa. The meaning of the 16th verse will be best seen by the following translation;

I heard thy report, and my bowels were troubled;

My lips quivered at thy voice:

Consumption [*tabes*] entered into my bones,

And my steps tottered under me. •

O, that I might be at rest before the day of distress,

When the invader shall come up against the people with his troops!

GREEN.

The verb נָחַח *noach* is used also for resting in the region of the dead; and it is probably in this sense that the prophet uses it here. A good man would rather wish to be gathered to his fathers in peace, than survive such a desolation of his country as is described in the next verse.

Ver. 17. *Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, &c.*]

For then the fig-tree shall not flourish,
Nor shall fruit be on the vines:

The produce of the olives shall fail,

And the fields shall supply no food:

The flocks shall be cut off from the fold,

And no herds shall be left in the stalls.

It was during this desolation, which is so poetically and beautifully described, that the land rested from tillage, and enjoyed its sabbatical years; which before, it seems, it had not been suffered to do, through the avarice and wickedness of the Jews. See 2 Chron. xxxvi. 20, 21. and Green.

Ver. 18. *Yet*] Or, *But for my part*. Instead of, *The God of my salvation*, the Vulgate reads, *In Jesus my God*: that Jesus, says Calmet, who is the joy, the consolation, the hope, the life of believers; without whom the world can offer us nothing but false joys; who was the object of the desires, and the perpetual consolation, of the prophets and patriarchs. See John, viii. 56.

Ver. 19. *And he will make me to walk, &c.*] *And cause me to tread again on my own high places*. By *high places*, the prophet seems to mean the fruitful hills of Judæa; at least Moses uses the word in this sense, Deut. xxxii. 13. Some are of opinion, that Habakkuk speaks only of the strongholds of the land; but if we reflect on the naked and defenceless state that Judæa was in when the Jews returned from captivity, we may rather be induced to think that the prophet meant no more than this; that after the land had rested seventy years; and enjoyed its sabbaths, it should become fruitful again; and that then the Jews should once more delight themselves in the plenty of its pleasant hills, as the hind on her favourite high places. As Habakkuk seems to have had the beginning of Moses's blessing in his eye at ver. 3. so in this he alludes to the conclusion of it. See Deut. xxxiii. 29. It appears from the last words, *To the chief musician, on his stringed instruments*, that this prayer was sung in the temple service. See Green. Houbigant, however, gives the last words another turn; rendering them thus, *And shall bring me to the tops of the mountains to victory in my song*; or, "that I may overcome, when those things which I here sing shall have their completion."

4 H 2

REFLEC-

REFLECTIONS.—1st, This chapter is called a prayer of Habakkuk the prophet: it is drawn up like David's psalms, and suited for the service of the sanctuary.

1. The prophet acknowledges the notices of God's will, which he had given him, and the impression that they made upon him. *O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid; because of the sad tidings concerning the desolations of his people, which affected him exceedingly.*

2. He cries on their behalf, that God would manifest his favour to them in the time of their distress. *O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years; give the people some tokens of regard before the captivity ends, or revive the work of grace among them, which cannot but comfort and support them. In the midst of the years make known thy pity, providence, and love: in wrath remember mercy, and shew them some signs of reconciliation, that they may not sink into despair. Note; When we are stirred up to cry to God, whatever wrath our souls appear to be under, there is then good hope of mercy in store for us.*

2dly, The prophet, as the encouragement of his faith, remembers the days of old, and mentions the past deliverances that God had wrought for his people, as a plea for present help.

1. He had appeared to them on Sinai, with most magnificent displays of his greatness and glory. He was seen advancing in majesty from afar, from Teman and Paran, while the heavens shone with his brightness, and earth rang with his praise, or was full of his light, he shone like the sun; he had horns, or beams, coming out of his hand or sides, begirt around with irradiation; and there was the hiding of his power; a little of his glory appeared; the far greater part was hid; for the greatness of his power who can understand?

2. He sent his messengers before him, to prepare the way of his people. *Before him went the pestilence, and burning soals went forth at his feet; when Egypt felt his plagues, or when the Canaanites were by his judgments consumed, or were at least weakened in order to their final destruction. He stood, and measured the earth; dividing the land of Canaan among the tribes, and with a look expelled the inhabitants. The mighty sons of Anak, strong as the everlasting mountains, were scattered and broken; and all the nobles and princes of the land, who thought their possessions sure as the perpetual hills, did bow before the God of Israel: for his ways are everlasting, nor can any of the sons of men frustrate his decided counsels, or stay his arm when he is determined to destroy. With panic fears the neighbouring nations of Midian and Cushan beheld and trembled, lest to them also the desolations should extend: so easily can God dismay the mightiest.*

3. When the Red Sea was divided, and Jordan driven back, it seemed as if the very rivers, affrighted, fled from his displeasure; whilst, as the captain of Israel's host, he rode triumphant through the parted waters, and led them on horses and chariots of salvation, walking securely along through the bed of the Red Sea. *The overflowing streams, Josh. iii. 15. passed by, retiring on either side: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high, roaring as it fled.*

4. His rivers cleaved the earth, when in the barren wilderness the stony rock at his command poured forth a torrent of waters.

5. To give Israel an opportunity to destroy their ene-

2

mies, the sun and moon stood still in their habitation, Josh. x. 12, 13. *At the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear; God himself fought for them, and directed them in the pursuit of their routed foes. Thy bow was made quite naked, to consume their enemies, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word, having sworn to their fathers to give them this land for a heritage. From one end of Canaan to the other did the Lord, as the leader of Israel's army, march in indignation against the wickedness of the inhabitants, and threshed them in anger, as corn on the floor. Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed; assisting and strengthening his divinely appointed generals, Moses, Aaron, and Joshua: thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, the princes of Canaan, by discovering the foundation, utterly destroying their cities and the inhabitants, unto the neck; the whole body politic, with all the members of it, being cut in pieces. Thou didst strike through with his flaves the head of his villages; turning their own arms against them, and ruining the country throughout. Their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly; they were confident of victory over God's poor people; or this was a part of their crimes which provoked these judgments of God against them.*

Some suppose that the whole of this section refers to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh, his erection of his spiritual kingdom in the world, the subdual of sin, Satan, death, and hell before him, and especially his coming at the latter day for the destruction of the anti-christian powers; of all which, his appearances for his people in time past, no doubt, were typical; and genuine believers may, in every time of their distress and trouble, as confidently hope to see this great salvation of God, as ever Israel experienced his salvation from their enemies of old. This is their glorious privilege. O, that none may come short of it!

3dly, The tidings of distress which the prophet heard concerning his countrymen, though there was hope in the end, affected him deeply.

1. *When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice; overpowered with fear and dismay; rottenness entered into my bones; his whole frame seemed as dissolved: I trembled in myself, at the desolations he beheld; that I might rest; or O, that I might be at rest; or notwithstanding I shall rest in the day of trouble; be safe under the divine protection, and delivered from the evil, though he plainly foresaw, that when he cometh up unto the people, when the Chaldeans with their king come up, he will invade them, or cut them in pieces, with his troops. Note; (1.) Holy souls tremble at God's word, and with awful apprehensions look forward to the wrath ready to be revealed from heaven. (2.) God's faithful people are enabled to exercise faith in him in the worst of times, and they shall be hid in the day of his fierce anger.*

2. Notwithstanding every discouraging circumstance, his faith triumphs in the God of his salvation. He supposes the worst of calamities which can happen; that drought, blasting, mildew, or the ravages of an enemy destroy their vines, fig-trees, and olives; that pestilence and famine devour the cattle, so that the barren fields are quite forsaken: *Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. And thus can a faithful soul under the*

loss

loss of every earthly comfort rejoice in Christ Jesus, in the present experience of his grace, and the holy expectation of his glory. *The Lord God is my strength, when every other help fails; and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, firm and swift to run the way of his commandments, amidst every difficulty and danger: and he will make me to walk upon mine high places; victorious over every foe, as every faithful saint of God shall shortly be, when he cometh to*

the mount of God in glory. Thus ends the prophet's prayer, with assured faith, and joyful hope; and he has left it upon record, directed to the chief singer on the stringed instruments, to teach God's believing people in all their trials never to cease from prayer and praise; but, rejoicing in hope, to expect with humble confidence the final, full, and eternal salvation of God.

THE BOOK
OF THE
PROPHET ZEPHANIAH.

ZEPHANIAH was of the tribe of Simeon. The Jews are of opinion, that his ancestors, recited at the beginning of his prophesy, were all prophets themselves. We have no exact knowledge either of his actions, or of the time of his death. He lived under king Josiah, who began to reign in the year of the world 3363, before Christ 637. The description which Zephaniab gives of the disorders that prevailed in Judah in his time, leads us to judge that he prophesied before the eighteenth year of Josiah; that is to say, before this prince had reformed the abuses and corruptions prevailing in his dominions. See 2 Kings, xxii. 3—13. Besides, he foretels the destruction of Nineveh, chap. ii. 13. which could not fall out before the sixteenth year of Josiah; allowing, with Berofus, twenty-one years to the reign of Nabopolassar over the Chaldeans. Therefore we must necessarily place the beginning of Zephaniab's prophesy at the beginning of the reign of Josiah. The style of this prophet is poetical, but contains nothing remarkable either with respect to the disposition of his subject, or the colouring of his diction. His method and his subject bear so near a resemblance to Jeremiab, that Saint Isidore asserts him to have been his abbeviator; nor is this the only prophet whom he resembles, as every one must own who compares him with Joel. See Calmet and Bishop Lowth.

C H A P. I.

God's severe judgment against Judah for divers sins.

[Before Christ 612.]

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.

2 ¶ I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the LORD.

3 I will consume man and beast, I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumbling-blocks with the

C H A P. I.

Ver. 2. I will utterly consume.] I am about to take away. Houbigant, to put to death and destroy. This first chapter contains the general threatening against all the people whom the Lord had appointed to the slaughter; against Judah, and against those who leap on the threshold; that is, the Philistines. See 1 Sam. v. 5. In the second chapter he inveighs against Moab, against Ammon, against Cush, against the Phœnicians and Assyrians; and there he foretels the fall of Nineveh, which happened in the year of

the world 3378. The third chapter has two parts; the first contains invectives and threatenings against Jerusalem; and the second gives comfortable assurances of a return from the captivity, and of a happy flourishing condition. Calmet.

Ver. 3. I will consume, &c.] I will take away; namely, from the land of Judah. Houbigant; who, instead of, And the stumbling-blocks with the wicked, reads, I will bring ruin on the wicked. Others read, The stumbling-blocks of the wicked; whereby must be meant idols and their worshippers.

Ver.

wicked; and I will cut off man from off the land, saith the LORD.

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, *and* the name of the Chemarims with the priests;

5 And them that worship the host of heaven upon the house-tops; and them that worship *and* that swear by the LORD, and that swear by Malcham;

6 And them that are turned back from the LORD; and *those* that have not fought the LORD, nor inquired for him.

7 Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the day of the LORD is at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests.

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.

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.

10 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, *that there shall be* the noise of a cry from the fish-gate, and an howling from the second, and a great crashing from the hills.

11 Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh, for all the merchant people are cut down; all they that bear silver are cut off.

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.

13 Therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation: they shall

Ver. 4. The name of the Chemarims, &c.] Of the [idolatrous] sacrificers with the priests. See the note on 2 Kings, xxiii. 5.

Ver. 5. And them that worship, and that swear, &c.] And those worshippers, who, when they swear by the Lord, swear also by Melchom; that is to say, who would unite together the worship of Jehovah, and that of Melchom, the idol of the Ammonites. See 2 Kings, xviii.

Ver. 7. He hath bid] He hath appointed his guests, that is to say, the Babylonians.

Ver. 9. Those that leap on the threshold] Over the threshold. Houbigant. Calmet observes, that this alludes to the custom of the Philistines, when they enter the temple of Dagon; but the author of the Observations is of a different opinion. That notion can have nothing to recommend it, says he, I think, but its being supposed by so old a writer as the Chaldee paraphrast: he is of opinion, that it alludes to the custom of riding into the houses, spoken of in the note on Prov. xvii. 19. and he observes, that such as are clothed with strange apparel, ver. 8. are words which, in this connection, seem only to mean the rich, who are conscious of such power and influence, as to dare in a time of oppression and danger to avow their riches, and who therefore were not afraid to wear the costly manufactures of strange countries, Ezek. xxvii. 7. though they were neither magistrates, nor of a royal descent. A great number of attendants is a modern piece of oriental magnificence. It appears to have been so anciently. See Ecclef. v. 11. These servants now, it is most certain, frequently attend their master on horseback, richly attired, sometimes to the number of twenty-five or thirty. If they did so anciently, such a number of servants attending great men, (who are represented by this very prophet, ch. iii. 3.

as at that time, in common, terrible oppressors) may be naturally supposed to ride into the people's houses, and having gained an admission by deceit, to force from them by violence large contributions; for this riding into houses is now practised by the Arabs, and consequently might be practised by others too anciently. It is not now peculiar to the Arabs; for Le Bruyn, after describing the magnificent furniture of several of the Armenian merchants at Julfa, that suburb of Isfahan in which they live, tells us, that the front door of the greatest part of these houses is very small, partly to hinder the Persians from entering into them on horseback, and partly that they may less observe the magnificence within. To which should be added, what he elsewhere observes, that these Armenians are treated with great rigour and insolence by the Persians. If this text refers to a violence of this sort, they are the thresholds of the oppressed over which they leaped; not the thresholds of the oppressive masters, (which some have supposed,) when they returned home laden with the spoil. See Observations, p. 57.

Ver. 10. A cry from the fish-gate] Which was at the entering of the city. Some render the next clause, And a howling from the middle part of the city: but Houbigant renders it, A howling from Misna; or from the second city which Manasseh built.

Ver. 11. Maktesh] This may be interpreted, says Houbigant, rock; what follows points out the place of the city where the merchants and silversmiths lived, and which perhaps was so named from a certain rock that was situated there. Instead of, All they that bear silver, Houbigant reads, All they that are loaded with silver.

Ver. 12. The men that are settled on their lees] The prophet here describes those men, who, trusting in their riches,

also build houses, but not inhabit *them*; and they shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof.

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.

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,

16 A day of the trumpet and alarm against

the fenced cities, and against the high towers.

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.

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.

paid very little regard to the threats of the prophets, and seemed intirely safe in their own eyes, while they kept their beloved treasures near them.

Ver. 14. Even the voice of the day of the Lord] For the message of the day of the Lord shall be bitter: The mighty man shall howl upon it. Houbigant. See 2 Kings, xxi. 14, &c.

Ver. 15. Of wasteness] Calamity or tumult.

Ver. 17. Their flesh] Their carcases.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have,

1. An account of the inspired penman of this prophecy, Zephaniah, whose ancestors for four generations prior to him are mentioned, probably as men of distinguished note; and some have thought him of the blood-royal, and a descendant from Hezekiah, king of Judah, the same word in the original as Hizkiah. He lived in the best times, even in the reforming reign of Josiah; and yet we find that the people in reality, many of them at least, notwithstanding their apparent change, continued bad, very bad; or they quickly relapsed, and departed from their promising beginnings. Of so short continuance are the effects wrought by the most zealous reformers among a backsliding people. *The word of the Lord came* to the prophet; for he spake not in his own name, but as the Spirit gave him utterance.

2. The burden of his prophecy is the approaching destruction of the land of Judæa, and all things therein, both man and beast.

[1.] *I will consume and cut off man from off the land, saith the Lord;* even the good men that yet remain will be involved in the national calamity. But *the wicked* are especially intended: against them the Lord will *stretch out his hand*, in wrath to smite and consume them from the earth, with their *stumbling-blocks*, those hated idols, which constituted their mortal sin. *I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place;* those who, notwithstanding all Josiah's care, still continued the worship of Baal: *and the name of the Chemarims with the priests.* The Chemarims were *idolatrous priests*, as the word is translated, 2 Kings, xxiii. 5. so called either from the black garments that they wore, or from their faces blackened with the smoke of the fires where they sacrificed. These should be cut off, yea, their very name buried in oblivion, or mentioned with detesta-

tion. And those who on house-tops worship the host of heaven shall share the same fate; with all those who *swear by the Lord, or to the Lord and Melchom, or Meloch*, seeking to reconcile the inconsistent services of both, and pretending to worship them together, irreconcilable as that must for ever be: *and them that are turned back from the Lord;* apostates from the profession which they once made: *and those that have not sought the Lord, nor inquired for him,* careless and prayerless sinners, who never troubled themselves about God, his worship, or service; these will he destroy together. *Note;* (1.) The prayerless soul is a lost soul. (2.) They who seek to reconcile their religion with the ways of the world, and would serve God and Mammon together, just go so far as the devil desires. If they swear by Melchom, conform to the maxims, customs, or vanities of the world, they may serve God in form as much as they please, but they will be numbered with the transgressors.

[2.] *I will consume the beasts, the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea;* being designed for man's comfort, they are involved in his punishment, when by sin he forfeits all his mercies.

2dly, The day of vengeance approaches, and the nation, as a sacrifice to divine justice, is ready to be offered up; and *the Lord hath bid his guests*, the Babylonians, or the fowls of the heaven, to feed upon the carcases of the slain.

1. Those are described who are devoted to destruction.

[1.] *The princes, and the king's children;* for judgment begins with the highest: *and all such as are clothed with strange apparel;* either the vestments in which they worshipped their idols; or they affected in their dress to imitate their heathen neighbours in finery and extravagance, and their clothes proclaimed their pride and the vanity of their hearts.

[2.] The oppressors, who *leap on the threshold*, who daringly thrust themselves in at their neighbour's door, and seize what comes to hand; *filling their master's houses with violence and deceit;* who set them on this wickedness, and protect them from justice and punishment.

[3.] *The rich merchants, and all they that bear silver,* having plenty of money to trade, and buy and sell, and get gain.

[4.] *All that are settled on their lees;* living in pleasure, affluence, ease, and carnal security, and this begetting infidelity;

CHAP. II.

An exhortation to repentance. The judgment of the Philistines, of Moab and Ammon, of Ethiopia and Assyria.

[Before Christ 612.]

GATHER yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired; 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.

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.

4 ¶ For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ash-

fidelity; that say in their heart, though, like many other practical atheists, they dare not openly avow their sentiments, *The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil*; denying his providential government of the world; and that neither his service would be attended with reward; nor sin with any punishment; leaving him out of their sight, and intimating, in fact, that there was no God. And as it is so much for their interest that there should be none, sensualists would fain persuade themselves that there is none: but such as these God will assuredly detect and punish. *I will search Jerusalem with candles*, that none may be able to hide themselves; and *punish* them with judgments from which none shall be able to escape. *Note*; Many are driven to the dreadful and deceitful refuge of infidelity, that they may silence conscience thereby, and enjoy their guilty pleasures undisturbed.

2. Their cry will be terrible when the stroke of vengeance descends. *In that day, saith the Lord, there shall be the noise of a cry from the fish-gate*, of the miserable inhabitants flying before their Chaldean pursuers; *and a great crushing from the hills*; either of the enemy shouting and rushing on to the slaughter, or of the houses of the nobles, built on the highest part of Zion and Moriah, now plundered and beat to the ground. *Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh*, a street of Jerusalem into which the enemy broke; or it is put for the whole body of the people, howling over their desolations; *Their merchants are cut down*, and their substance is become a spoil to the Chaldeans: yea, *their goods are become a booty*; and *their houses*, which they built, flattering themselves with a long abode in them, *are become a desolation*; and *the vineyards* that they planted, afford their produce not to them, but to their conquerors.

3. The prophet with all others who are like him are commanded to *hold their peace at the presence of the Lord God*, not daring to dispute against his righteous judgments, nor suffered to open their mouths to pray for a people devoted to destruction.

3dly, If any thing can alarm the sinners in Zion, the prophet's awful warnings must surely do it.

1. *The great day of the Lord*, when he will take vengeance on the Jews by the sword of the Babylonians, *is near*; it *is near, and hasteth greatly*; but a moment remains to fly from this devouring fire. It is madness for the sinner to *slumber*, whose damnation *slumbereth not*.

2. This will be a day of terror and dismay. *The voice of the day of the Lord* will strike a panic into the boldest; *the mighty men shall cry there bitterly*, quite dispirited, and

wringing their hands when they should grasp the sword. *That day is a day of wrath*; of the wrath of God, and of the fury of the Chaldeans, his instruments of vengeance: *a day of trouble and distress* to the miserable inhabitants; of *wasteness and desolation* to the whole land, to Jerusalem, the temple, and all the cities thereof: *a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness*, without a gleam of hope, and big with despair: *A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers*, spreading horror and dismay on every side. *And I will bring distress upon men*, perplexed, and not knowing which way to turn; *that they shall walk like blind men*, rushing upon their own ruin.

3. Destruction universal and unavoidable will ensue. *Their blood shall be poured out as dust*; so profusely, so disregarded; *and their flesh as the dung*; their carcases left unburied on the earth. *Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath*; for in that day they profit not: *but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy*; so furious that nothing can stay the raging flames: *for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land*, and leave them neither root nor branch. *Note*; It is a fearful thing indeed to fall into the hands of a jealous God.

4. Sin, sin, that accursed thing, is the cause of all this misery. *Because they have sinned against the Lord*; this is the provocation, and the sting of every affliction: it is this which puts the worm that never dies into the conscience, and kindles the flames which never can be quenched. O sin, sin, what hast thou done!

CHAP. II.

Ver. 1. O nation not desired] *O nation, that receiveth not instruction*. Houbigant renders this and the next verse as follows: *O nation without knowledge*. *Ver. 2. Before you be carried away as the chaff*, when the day shall come; before the fierce anger, &c.

Ver. 3. Which have wrought his judgment] *Keep his judgments*. Houbigant.

Ver. 4. For Gaza shall be forsaken] *For, lo, Gaza is forsaken*; and so throughout, in the present tense: as much as to say, "Behold, the cities of the Philistines are taken and plundered by this victorious people; therefore your destruction draweth nigh." After Psammiticus king of Egypt, who took the cities of the Philistines, his son Necho came, who carried away king Jehoahaz in bonds. See Houbigant.

dod at the noon-day, and Ekron shall be rooted up.

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.

6 And the sea-coast shall be dwellings and cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks.

7 And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed thereupon: in the houses of Athkelon shall they lie down in the evening: for the LORD their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity.

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.

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 salt-pits, and a perpetual desolation: the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them.

10 This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified *themselves* against the people of the LORD of Hosts.

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.

12 ¶ Ye Ethiopians also, ye *shall be* slain by my sword.

13 ¶ And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, *and* dry like a wilderness.

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; *their* voice shall sing in the windows; desolation *shall be* in the thresholds: for he shall uncover the cedar-work.

Ver. 5. The Cherethites] The Cretans. They are supposed to have been a colony of the Philistines. See the note on 1 Sam. xxx. 14.

Ver. 7. The coast shall be for the remnant] That is, the Maccabees who subdued the Philistines and the Ammonites. See ver. 9.

Ver. 9. Even the breeding of nettles] A forsaken place of nettles. Houbigant. Instead of *my people*, in the last clause, Houbigant reads *my nation*.

Ver. 11. For he will famish, &c.] He will dissipate. Houbigant. But Bishop Warburton observes, that the expression, as it stands in our version, is noble, and alludes to the popular superstitions of Paganism, which conceived that the gods were nourished by the steam of sacrifices. But when were the heathen gods thus famished, but in the first ages of Christianity? *Every one from his place, or in his place; that is to say, they were not to go up to Jerusalem to worship;—even all the isles of the heathens.* But when did they worship the God of Israel, every one from his place, before the preaching of the apostles? Then indeed their speedy and general conversion distinguished them from the rest of the nation. Houbigant observes, that the calling of the Gentiles is mentioned here very appositely, and in its proper place, as in order of time it followed soon after the kingdom of the Maccabees.

Ver. 13. Will make Nineveh a desolation] Dr. Prideaux observes, that, Chyniladanus being king of the Assyrian and Babylonian empire, Nabopolassar his general took the latter from him, in the sixteenth year of Josiah; fourteen

years after which, Sarracus the king was slain, and Nineveh destroyed, which completed the fall of Assyria. Rauwolff observes in his Travels, that on this side the river Tigris in Mesopotamia, it is so sandy and dry, that you would think you were in the middle of the deserts of Arabia. See Prideaux's Connection, An. 612. and 626.

Ver. 14. And flocks shall lie down, &c.] And flocks of every kind of animals shall lie down in the midst of her: both the pelican and the porcupine shall lodge in the upper chapters or carved work of it: the voice of birds shall be heard through the windows; the crow shall sit in the thresholds; for her roofs of cedar shall be made bare; or, he shall uncover her cedar-work. Houbigant.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, God warns before he strikes, that sinners may have time to repent, and prevent the threatened judgments.

1. A summons is sent to this people. *Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, to fast and pray, and humble your souls; or search yourselves; examine your ways, that you may discover your sins, and turn unto the Lord, O nation not desired, or not desirous after God and his favour; negligent and careless, and ignorant of divine things, or not pleasing to him, but odious through the multitude of their provocations.*

2. They are urged instantly to lay their case to heart, *before the decree bring forth, and be put in execution; before the day pass as the chaff, when they should be driven into captivity, unable to withstand their fate, as chaff before the*

15 This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, *I am*, and *there is none besides 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.

the whirlwind; *before the fierce anger of the Lord, the day of the Lord's anger, come upon you*; terrible beyond expression. Delays are dangerous, where eternity is at stake and the wrath of God is threatened: we need be quickened to seize the present moment; and to-day, whilst it is called to-day, not to harden our hearts.

3. The few gracious souls among them are addressed, whatever others do, to make their calling and election sure. *Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth*: this is the character of God's people; they are meek and lowly of heart, patient under the provocations of men, and submissive under the afflictive providences of God: *which have wrought his judgment*; obedient to his laws, observant of his worship. Such as these, who will receive the word of exhortation, are enjoined to seek the Lord by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. *Seek righteousness, seek meekness*; a greater increase of grace, that they may be more holy and exemplary; for none who know themselves can rest in any present attainments, conscious how short they come at the best; and therefore, *forgetting those things which are behind, they reach forth unto those things which are before, pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*.

4. There is hope that such faithful souls may escape the general desolations, and, by a peculiar interposition of Divine Providence, be hid in the day of the Lord's anger, and not perish with their ungodly countrymen: but, whether involved in temporal calamities or not with others, it not only may be, but it certainly shall be, that such shall be hid in the great day of his wrath.

2dly, The neighbouring nations are here called to the bar, and their doom read. Though judgment begins at the house of God, it will not end there. The Philistines were the ancient enemies of Israel, and would rejoice at their fall; but they are destined to the same destruction.

1. They shall be extirpated. God pronounces a woe against them, with their neighbours the Cherethites, unless this be another name for the Philistines. Their capital cities are devoted to ruin: they must fall since *God's word is against them*, whose determined purposes are irresistible. Their destruction will be universal; not an inhabitant shall be left; and their sea-coast, where their cities once stood full of inhabitants, shall only now afford a few miserable cottages, where shepherds watch and fold their flocks.

2. Judah shall possess the land, repair and inhabit their cities in peace, *when the Lord shall visit them, and turn away their captivity*, which was fulfilled after their return from Babylon, in the days of the Maccabees.

3dly, Moab and Ammon, the children of Lot, are joined together, alike in sin and in suffering.

1. Their sins are, [1.] Reproach and reviling of God's

people, insulting them in the day of their calamity, and probably helping forward their ruin; and they *magnified themselves against their border*, seizing what lay contiguous to their country: but God heard, and noted their words and works, and will recompense them. [2.] *Their pride*. Puffed up with self-conceit, they looked on the people of the Lord of Hosts as contemptible, and arrogantly despised their religion and their God. *Note*; Pride is the first-born of hell, and in God's sight most odious.

2. Their judgment is the same; condemned to an overthrow terrible as that of Sodom and Gomorrah, their country shall become barren and uncultivated as a wilderness; and Israel, whom they have insulted shall, after their return from Babylon, spoil them, and possess the country, after it had begun to revive from the desolations of Nebuchadnezzar: and this is confirmed by the oath of the Lord of Hosts, none of whose words shall fail. *Note*; They who have trampled on others, are brought in just judgment under the feet of those whom they thus insulted.

3. A gracious promise, which respects the times of the gospel, closes the burthen of Moab and Ammon. God will not only be terrible to them, but he *will furnish* or bring leanness upon *all the gods of the earth*, when idolatry before the power of the gospel of Jesus should be destroyed; *and men shall worship him, every one from his place, or in his place*, without going up to Jerusalem, the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise being acceptable now in every place; *even all the isles of the heathen*: and, blessed be God, we see the promise fulfilled graciously to us in this land.

4thly, The inhabitants of Arabia, or Ethiopia, and the Assyrians, with Nineveh their capital, are devoted to destruction, which was brought upon them by Nebuchadnezzar. And we have,

1. The state of prosperity and security in which Nineveh had been. *This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly*; mirth and jollity once rang through her palaces; and, fearless of danger, no melancholy thought interrupted the jocund hours: *that said in her heart, I am, and there is none besides me*; none to be compared to me for wealth, strength, and beauty. But when self-complacence swells the bosom of the proud, and security lulls the sinner to his deceitful rest, ruin hangs over him, wrath is at his heels.

2. The miserable situation to which Nineveh shall be reduced. Turned to a heap of ruins, these proud palaces shall become the den of wild beasts, and the abode of every rueful ominous bird. The description is inimitably beautiful, and which a comment cannot but debase. It expresses the utter desolation which would ensue; and every passenger who shall behold the scene, while they wonder at the fearful change, will *hiss and wag the hand*, insulting over her fall, who so often insulted over others.

· C H A P. III.

A sharp reproof of Jerusalem for divers sins. An exhortation to wait for the restoration of Israel, and to rejoice for their salvation by God.

[Before Christ 612.]

WO E to her that is filthy and polluted,
to the oppressing city!

2 She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the LORD; she drew not near to her God.

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

4 Her prophets *are* light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

10 From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, *even* the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering.

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.

12 I will also leave in the midst of thee an

C H A P. III.

Ver. 1. Woe to her that is filthy, &c.] Woe to her that provoketh wrath, and is defiled; to the oppressed city; or city of oppressors. Ver. 2. Which beareth not the voice, nor receiveth instruction, nor hath hope in Jehovah, nor approacheth to her God. Ver. 3. Whose princes, &c.—They do not gnaw the bones, or, they leave no bones to gnaw in the morning; or, they rest not even till the morning. Houbigant; who observes, that the prophet in this verse compares the judges of Jerusalem to evening wolves, because they begin to hunt for their prey in the evening, yet they continue to do so throughout the whole night, and even till the morning.

Ver. 5. Every morning, &c.] That is, "Every day he fails not to give fresh evidences of his justice upon these princes, false prophets, and idolatrous priests." The allusion is to the custom of the Jews and neighbouring nations, who passed judgments only in the morning.

Ver. 7. Thou wilt receive instruction] Thou, that is, Jerusalem, whom, nevertheless, the examples of the neighbouring nations, whom God had destroyed, ver. 6. profited not. Instead of, But they rose early, &c. Houbigant reads, But they delayed not to worship their vain gods.

Ver. 8. Therefore] Nevertheless. "Notwithstanding these provocations, I exhort the pious among you to expect the accomplishment of the promises which I have made of restoring the Jewish nation to my favour: in order to which, I will execute remarkable judgments upon

"the unbelievers and disobedient." It is very common with the prophets to subjoin the most comfortable promises to the most fearful threatenings, and, after having denounced the captivity, to foretel the deliverance of the people; but the prophet here seems to look farther; even to the Gospel times, and perhaps to the future and final restoration of the Jews. See the following verses.

Ver. 9. For then will I turn, &c.] Houbigant renders it, For then will I pour into the people a pure language; that they may all invoke the name of Jehovah, and serve him with one shoulder; that is to say, with unanimity and consent; alluding to the unanimity of the Levites in carrying the ark. The prophet foretels the same things here with Joel, chap. ii. 28. I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, &c.

Ver. 10. From beyond the rivers, &c.] From the borders of the rivers of Ethiopia, those whom I have hitherto dispersed shall become my suppliants, and shall bring me an offering. Houbigant. The Jews, dispersed in the most distant countries, as the farthest parts of Ethiopia, shall come into the Christian church, and there pay their adorations to the God of their fathers.

Ver. 11. Them that rejoice in thy pride] Those who raised, or caused thy pride; namely, the Jewish priests and scribes, who proudly boasted themselves against the Messiah; and in whose stead the Lord introduced the meek and lowly people, the disciples of Christ; ver. 12. Instead of, not be ashamed

afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD.

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.

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

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.

16 In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: *and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack.*

17 The LORD thy God in the midst of thee *is* mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.

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.

19 Behold, at that time I will undo all

ashamed—and, because of my holy mountain, we may read, not be put to shame and in my holy mountain.

Ver. 14. Sing, O daughter of Zion] These hymns of joy, though in some measure applicable to the return of the captivity, yet in their full propriety belong to the times of the Gospel. *The king of Israel*, spoken of in the next verse, is Jesus Christ, who reigns truly over his people, by his empire of grace and of love.

Ver. 16. Let not thine hands be slack] *Let not thine hands fall down.* Houbigant. See Heb. xii. 12.

Ver. 17. He will save, &c.] He will bring salvation; he will rejoice and be glad over thee; he will renew his love, and joy over thee with singing, as in a solemn assembly. *Ver. 18. For I will take away those who oppressed thee; they shall be far from thee, that they may bring no reproach upon thee.* Houbigant.

Ver. 19. I will undo, &c.] I will oppress. Houbigant; who observes, that from the 13th verse to the end of the chapter, the prophet speaks of the last return and restoration of the Jews; as the former part respected the rising church of the Christians; for Sion and Jerusalem point out the Jewish nation, which shall not see evil any more, as they saw it in the last destruction of their city and state by the Romans. Instead of before *your eyes*, in the next verse, it should be read before *their eyes*; that is, the eyes of the people of all the earth.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Jerusalem again is the burthen of this prophesy: where God might justly have expected all obedience, there nothing is found but abomination.

1. The whole city is full of wickedness. *Woe to her that is filthy and polluted* with complicated sins; *to the oppressing city*, where lawless violence prevailed. *She obeyed not the voice*; disobedient to God's will, and paying no regard to his law: *she received not correction*; neither the admonitions of the prophets, nor the rod of afflictive providences, produced any good effect. *She trusted not in the Lord*, but in her idols and heathen allies: *she drew not near to her God*; breaking the covenant, forsaking the God of her mercies, and restraining prayer before him; which some particularly apply to the Pharisees in the days of Christ, who were full of uncleanness, trusted in themselves, and came not to Jesus for pardon, righteousness, and salvation.

2. The leading men are chief in transgression. The nobles and judges are rapacious and cruel as *roaring lions* and *evening wolves*, when, driven by hunger, they fall forth in search of prey; *they gnaw not the bones till the morning*, or *in the morning*; eating up on the spot even the very bones of the prey which falls into their hands. *Her prophets are light and treacherous*; their vain conduct gave the lie to their pretensions, and their word tended to betray the interests of religion, and to ruin the souls of men. *Note*; Levity in a minister must render him a discredit to his profession. *Her priests* were faithless; *they polluted the sanctuary* by their sins, which they should have adorned by the purity of their lives: and *did violence to the law*; perverted it by false glosses, or contradicted what it taught by their bad examples: these, therefore, shall receive greater damnation.

3. Their sins were aggravated by many considerations: [1.] God's presence was eminently with them. *The just Lord is in the midst of thee*; his Shechinah dwelt among them; he beheld all their ways, which could not but provoke the eyes of his holiness. *He will not do iniquity*; nor can he suffer it in others with impunity. *Every morning doth he bring his judgment to light*; sending his prophets to warn men of the evil and danger of their ways. *He stilleth not*, with long patience and constant admonitions to call them to repentance: *but the unjust knoweth no shame*; never blushing at their guilt or their ingratitude; and they who are past shame are past cure.

[2.] He had executed judgments on other nations, that they might take warning; destroying their cities, and leaving their land desolate without inhabitants. *I said, Surely thou wilt fear me*;—afflicted with the sufferings of others, and not daring to provoke a jealous God. *Thou wilt receive instruction*, by their sad case; *so their dwelling should not be cut off, howsoever I punished them*; his visitations being designed to rescue them from destruction, if they heard the rod, and who had appointed it. But,

[3.] *They rose early, and corrupted all their doings*; grew worse and worse, filling up the measure of their iniquities; and wilfully rushed on their ruin. *Note*; Damned souls will to eternity have only their own obstinacy and folly to blame. *How oft would I have gathered you, and ye would not.*

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.

2ly, Amidst all the desolations determined, the prospect of the days of the Messiah gives some reviving hopes to the pious, who are commanded to wait still upon God, and expect his salvation.

1. He will *rise up* to avenge himself, and seize the prey; for which purpose he assembles the nations of the ungodly, to pour out upon them his wrath, who refuse to submit to the proffers of his grace, and obey not his Gospel. Or the sense may be, He will *assemble the kingdoms*, the Roman army collected from them, *to pour upon them*, the Jewish people, *mine indignation*, for rejecting their Messiah; and their whole country shall be devoured *with the fire of my jealousy*.

2. He will set up and establish the gospel kingdom throughout the world, and bring the nations to the obedience of the faith, particularly in the latter days, which are here more particularly referred to: *For then will I turn to the people a pure language*; the converting grace of God effectually changing the conversation; so that renewed souls speak a different language from what they used to do, telling now of the things which God hath done for their souls, and with one mind and one mouth glorifying him: and the pious among all nations shall have one common tongue, and join in the same blessed service of prayer and praise, *calling upon the name of the Lord, and serving him with one consent*. And thus God's dispersed people, now brought to humble supplicants, from Egypt and all the places of their dispersion, shall come, bringing their *offering*, even their bodies, souls, and spirits, a living sacrifice to God. Prayer is the immediate voice of the humbled sinner; and every true supplicant, not only in words but in deed, presents himself to God, to glorify him, not only in his lips but in his life. In that day, in those last days especially, their shame shall be done away, their sins being forgiven, and the power of them subdued. The proud and self-righteous, the hypocrites, such as were the Scribes and Pharisees who trusted in their services at the temple, and on their works and doings, shall then be destroyed, nothing being more offensive to God, than that high conceit which such miserable sinners entertain of their own formal services and imperfect duties. *I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people*; as when the Chaldeans carried all the nobles captives, and left the poor of the land for husbandmen and vine-dressers. And God's people are in general a poor people, afflicted frequently with temptations and persecution; poor, generally in worldly goods, always in spirit; sensible of their own wants, and beggars at the door of mercy for the bread of life: *and they shall trust in the name of the Lord*, in his infinite merit, as the only ground of their acceptance before God. *The remnant of Israel*, these poor afflicted faithful souls, *shall not do iniquity*, but by the grace of God shall be enabled to walk in all holy conversation and godliness; *nor speak lies*, truth stamping all their words; being obedient to the doctrines of the Gospel, and holding the truth in the light and love of it: *neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth*; for they shall feed, as the sheep of Christ's pasture, on the ordinances, *and lie down in peace*

under the protection of their great Shepherd; *and none shall make them afraid*; none of their enemies, spiritual or temporal, shall be able to terrify or to destroy them; for their heart standeth fast, and trusteth in the Lord.

3dly, The promises made in the latter part of this chapter have a most immediate respect to the restoration of the Jews in the last days; for though they had some fulfilment in their deliverance from Babylon, yet after that they saw evil again, and are now lying under the longest and heaviest of all their afflictions; but when God shall fulfil this word, *they shall not see evil any more*.

Zion is called upon to rejoice and shout for joy in the prospect of her approaching glorious restoration; and she is enjoined no longer to fear or be dispirited in the view of the greatness or number of her foes, because God promises,

1. To remove all judgments from her; all temporal judgments, such as exile, dispersion, poverty, contempt; all spiritual judgments, such as blindness, unbelief, and hardness of heart. All her *enemies shall be cast out*, that now possess the land of Israel: and *he will undo all that afflict them*. Though weak, feeble, and halting, their *captivity shall be brought back*, never to be repeated; *for thou shalt not see evil any more*, their troubles now being for ever at an end.

2. God promises to be in the midst of them, as *their king*, Messiah, to save them from the power of all evil. He is *mighty*, yea, Almighty, able to save to the uttermost, and to fulfil all the promises of his word in defiance of whatever opposition may be raised from Satan, sin, death, or hell; and willing as he is able, *he will save his faithful people*. *He will rejoice over thee with joy and singing*, the conversion of sinners being the delight of the Redeemer; and he sees then in them *the travail of his soul, and is satisfied*. *He will rest in his love*; he will himself feel the highest complacency in the expressions of his favour vouchsafed to his dear and faithful people.

3. They shall again enjoy the ordinances which have been so long interrupted, and after which they mourned during their dispersion. *I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly*, who weep over the desolations of Zion, *who are of thee*, the true children of the Jerusalem which is above, the mother of us all; *to whom the reproach of it was a burden*, deeply affected with the insults of their enemies, which was the case of the pious Jews in Babylon, who were, in God's appointed time, restored to their temple and worship at Jerusalem. The Jews in their present dispersion lament also the sad interruption of the service of the sanctuary; and those who are converted from among them long for the day of their brethren's restoration, when they may be gathered into the church of Christ, and be collected together in their own land, and serve God literally in his holy mountain at Jerusalem, and their reproach be for ever rolled away.

4. They shall become honourable and respected, as they have been contemned and insulted. *I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame*, for their rejection of the Messiah: but now, being turned

unto

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

unto the Lord, all Christian lands will praise them for their *praise among all people of the earth*; for which happy event
obedience to the faith ; and the fame of their conversion all gracious souls should unite their fervent supplications,
will spread a general joy ; they shall then be *a name and a* that the Lord would be pleased to hasten it in his time.

THE BOOK
OF THE
PROPHET HAGGAI.

HAGGAI was born, in all probability, in Babylon, whence he returned with Zerubbabel. After the death of Cambyfes, Darius the son of Hyftafpes coming to the empire, about 517 years before Chrift, Haggai was excited by God (Ezra, v. 1. &c.) to exhort Zerubbabel and Jofhua to refume the work of the temple, which had now been for a long time interrupted. The prophet reproaches them with their indolence, and tells them, that they were very careful to lodge themfelves commodioufly, while the houfe of the Lord remained a defert place, and laid buried in its own ruins. He tells them, that the calamities wherewith God had afflicted them fince their return were punifhments for their neglecting to carry on the work of repairing his temple. The remonftrances of Haggai had their effect; and in the fecond year of Darius, of the world 3484, which was the fixteenth after the return of the Jews from Babylon, they began again to proceed in this work. No fooner had they fet about it, than the Lord commanded Haggai to tell the people, chap. ii. 3. that if any one had feen the temple built by Solomon, and did not think this to be fo beautiful and magnificent a ftructure as that was, he ought not to be difcouraged; becaufe God would render this ftill more auguft and venerable than the firft had been; not in the abundance of gold and filver which might adorn it, but by the prefence of the Mefiah, who was the defire of all nations, and by the glory which he would add to it. See Calmet.

C H A P. I.

Haggai reproveth the people for neglecting the building of the Lord's houfe: he incites them to the building: he promifeth God's affiftance to them in the work.

[Before Chrift 520.]

IN the fecond year of Darius the king, in the fixth month, in the firft day of the

month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the fon of Shealtiel governor of Judah, and to Jofhua the fon of Jofedech, the high prieft, faying,

2 ¶ Thus fpeaketh the LORD of Hofts, faying, This people fay, The time is not come, the time that the LORD'S houfe fhould be built.

C H A P. I.

Ver. 1. Zerubbabel the fon of Shealtiel] Zerubbabel was of the family of David, the grandfon of Jechoniah, and the fon of Shealtiel, as he is faid to be here, and in Matt. i. 12. or the fon of Pedaiah, and the grandfon of Shealtiel, as it feems we ought to infer from 1 Chron. iii. 18. or, moft probably, the fon of Pedaiah by nature, and of Salathiel by adoption. He is called the *governor*, not the king of

Judah. See 1 Kings, xx. 24. which is the rather to be obferved, as there are fome who ftrangely apply to Zerubbabel thofe prophecies wherein it is foretold that Ifrael fhould return and ferve David their king; prophecies which pertain only to Mefiah, the king of the Jews. Jofedech was high-prieft in the reign of Zedekiah, and was carried away captive by Nebuchadnezzar. See 1 Chron. vi. 15. His fon fucceeded him in the fame dignity,

3 Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,

4 *Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?*

5 Now therefore thus saith the LORD of Hosts; Consider your ways.

6 Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages *to put it into a bag with holes.*

7 ¶ Thus saith the LORD of Hosts; Consider your ways.

8 Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD.

9 Ye looked for much, and, lo, *it came to little*; and when ye brought *it home*, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of

Hosts. Because of mine house that *is waste*, and ye run every man unto his own house.

10 Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed *from* her fruit.

11 And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon *that* which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.

12 ¶ Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, (as the LORD their God had sent him) and the people did fear before the LORD.

13 Then spake Haggai the LORD's messenger in the LORD's message unto the people, saying, *I am with you*, saith the LORD.

nity, when Judah returned from captivity, being confirmed in his office by the great Sanhedrin. See Grotius and Calmet.

Ver. 2. This people say, The time is not come.] The Jews said this, not because they denied that the seventy years were completed, after which the prophets had foretold that the temple should be rebuilt,—for it was extremely easy to compute those years; but, because they feared the king of Persia, and were greater time-servers, than believers in God. See Houbigant.

Ver. 4. Is it time for you, &c.] *Is the time come for you to inhabit your ceiled houses, while that house lieth desolate?* This is in answer to ver. 2. “You complain of the times; yet they have not been so difficult but you have found means and opportunity to build fine houses for yourselves, though you are content to let the house of the Most High continue in ruins.” See Houbigant and Calmet.

Ver. 6. Ye have sown much, and bring in little.] “Consider both your ingratitude in neglecting to restore my house and worship; and what you have acquired by your dealings: while devoid of my blessing and protection, none of your undertakings thrive; nor do you enjoy the fruits of your labour: the reason of this is evident.” See ver. 9.

Ver. 9. I did blow upon it.] *I blasted it.*

Ver. 13. Then spake Haggai.] *Then Haggai, whom the Lord had sent for the work of the Lord, spake to the people, saying, &c.* The work of the Lord, means the work of the house of the Lord mentioned in the last clause of the next verse; which should be rendered, *And applied themselves to the work of the house of the Lord, &c.*

VOL. IV.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The date of this prophecy is in the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, the first day of the month; not Darius the Mede, but probably Darius Hystaspes, who came to the throne about fifteen years after the proclamation of Cyrus. *The word of the Lord* which was sent to Haggai, he is commanded to deliver to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and to Joshua the son of Josedech the high-priest, these being the chief persons in ecclesiastical and civil matters, on whom it was especially incumbent to stir up the people to their duty.

1. The Jews are charged with great negligence and remissness in the work of God. *This people*, who have so lately enjoyed such distinguished favours from God, say, *The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built*; they had begun the foundations immediately on their return from Babylon, but the building had been interrupted through the misrepresentations of their enemies at the Persian court; and though for a season they had liberty to proceed, they seem to have been too indifferent about it, and were ready to suggest arguments to encourage themselves in their negligence; either they were too poor as yet to proceed in it, or were afraid of the Persians, or the late unseasonable years were interpreted as a providential intimation that it was not yet proper to carry on the work; and therefore they deferred it to a more convenient season. So often are we ready to put off what is present duty to some future time, and in excuse to pretend a providential interposition, when in truth we only follow our own inclinations.

2. For this lukewarmness and carelessness God's displeasure had already appeared against them. The wants of which they complained had hence their origin; nor

4 K

would

14 ¶ And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of Hosts their God,

15 In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

CHAP. II.

He encourageth the people to the work, by a promise of greater glory to the second temple, than was in the first. In the type of holy things and unclean, he sheweth that their sins hindered the work. God's promise to Zerubbabel.

[Before Christ 520.]

IN the seventh *month*, in the one and twentieth *day* of the month, came the word of the LORD by the prophet Haggai, saying,

2 Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying,

3 Who *is* left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? *is it* not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?

4 Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I *am* with you, saith the LORD of Hosts:

5 *According to* the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.

6 For thus saith the LORD of Hosts; Yet once, it *is* a little while, and I will shake the

would they be relieved till this matter was rectified. Their land was under a curse, and though *they sowed much*, they *reaped little*; they had neither meat, drink, nor clothes sufficient to support and keep them warm; or what they had, God permitted them to have no comfort in; and the money they gained was quickly lost, as if they had put it into a bag with holes. The drought had parched up their land, and disappointed their expectations of plenty; and what they gathered into their storehouses, *God blew upon it*, and it wasted insensibly; or *blew it away* as stubble, by some providential judgments: and the reason he informs them of, *because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house*, diligent and active in seeking their own interests, and promoting their own advantage, and unconcerned about the house of God and the glory of his name. *Note*; (1.) They who look for much from creature-comforts, must prepare for disappointment. (2.) In our common blessings we are as much dependent upon God's ceaseless providential care, as if we were fed daily by miracles. (3.) If God blows upon our possessions, we shall pine in the midst of plenty, and his wrath will embitter every comfort. (4.) They who seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, consult best for both worlds; all happiness in time, as well as eternity, arising only from his favour and blessing.

3. He *expostulates* with them hereupon. *Is it time for you, O ye, who can find no time to serve God, and build his house, to dwell in your ceiled houses?* Theirs were completely finished and furnished, while his lay waste. So often do professors *seek their own things, and not these which are Jesus Christ's*: but great is their guilt.

4. He endeavours to rouse them from their lethargy, and to set them to work. *Consider your ways*, what miseries they have already brought upon you; the baseness and ingratitude of such conduct, and what will be the end of

these things. *Consider your ways*, that, convinced of their evil, you may amend them without delay, and begin instantly the neglected work of God's temple. *Go up to the mountain, and bring wood from Lebanon, and build the house, and I will take pleasure in it*, accept their labours and the sacrifices there offered; and *I will be glorified, saith the Lord*, in the work of your hands; the worship there performed should redound to his praise. *Note*; (1.) The first step to all godliness is serious consideration. (2.) They who consider their ways to any good purpose, must shew it by immediate reformation of what is wrong. (3.) Whenever we return to God and his neglected service, he will still be found gracious, he will take pleasure in us, and be glorified in mercy.

2dly, We have an account of the happy success with which the prophet's admonition was attended.

1. They obeyed instantly the voice of the Lord their God. Zerubbabel and Joshua led the way, and the people cheerfully followed their good examples, *fearing before the Lord*, under a sense of his displeasure visible in their past visitations, and justly apprehensive lest they should provoke heavier judgments. *They came and did work in the house of the Lord of Hosts, their God*, within three weeks after the warning that they had received, the intermediate time probably being spent in providing the materials. *Note*; (1.) The word in the mouths of God's ministers is the voice of God, and must be respected accordingly. (2.) Holy fear is a blessed principle of action. (3.) When we see how negligent we have been, the consideration should quicken us to double diligence, that we may redeem the time. (4.) Whatever good is in us, or done by us, we owe it intirely to God's free grace, from whom alone all holy desires and all just works do proceed: nevertheless, none will have cause to complain, that he was not willing to begin and carry on a work of grace in their souls.

2. God

heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;

7 And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of Hosts.

8 The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of Hosts.

9 The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of Hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of Hosts.

2. God hereupon sends his prophet to them, with a new message of encouragement. *I am with you, saith the Lord*, to pardon your past neglect, to assist you in your present labour, to protect you from your enemies, and to crown your work with success. *Note*; If God says, *I am with you* in any undertaking, that is enough, we need not wish for more; his presence includes all blessedness and almighty aid.

CHAP. II.

Ver. 3. Who is left among you, &c.] See the note on Ezra, iii. 12. The foundation of this house was laid in the second year of Cyrus; the second year of Cyrus was fifty-three years after the destruction of the first temple; so that the oldest men among those who returned might very well remember it; and though this prophecy was uttered fifteen years after the foundation of the second temple, yet there might still survive some of those who had seen the structure built by Solomon. See Lowth. The latter clause of this verse should be rendered, *Doth not this appear as nothing in comparison of it*; that is to say, of the first temple?

Ver. 5. According to the word that I covenanted] Houbigant begins this verse with the last clause of the fourth, *For I, saith the Lord of Hosts, will bring to you that which I covenanted with you, when ye came out of Egypt; and my Spirit shall remain with you: fear ye not.* What was that covenant? says Bishop Warburton;—that Israel should be his people, and he be their God and king. Therefore, it cannot mean barely that he would be their God, and they should be his people; for this was but part of the covenant; nor can it mean that they should be conducted by an extraordinary providence as at their coming out of Egypt, and during the first periods of the theocracy; for this was but the effect of the covenant; and besides, we know that that dispensation and providence soon ceased after the re-establishment. The meaning therefore must be, that he would still continue their king as well as God; yet at the same time, when this theocracy was restored, it was both fit, on account of its dignity, and necessary for the people's assurance, that it should be attended with some unusual display of the divine favour: accordingly, prophets were raised up, and an extraordinary providence for some time administered, as appears from many places in these prophets. See Haggai, chap. i. 6. 11. chap. ii. 16. 19. Zech. viii. 12. Mal. iii. 10, 11. and Div. Leg. book v. sect. 3.

Ver. 6—9. For thus saith the Lord] The excellent Bishop Chandler has, with his usual learning and judgment, explained this remarkable prophecy; and it is from him that we have chiefly extracted what follows. The occasion of this prophecy, says he, was the dejection of the Jews at the unpropitious appearance of their new-erecting temple,

ver. 3. The comfort, therefore, in the prophet's message was surely suited to this circumstance, and contains a promise of some glory to be conferred on this temple, to make it exceed the glory of the former. Wherein the glory of the first temple consisted, is not said; but it sufficiently appears from the nature of their complaint, and from the eighth verse, that they considered it to have consisted in magnificence of structure, and richness of ornaments. These God makes no account of; the silver is mine, and the gold, &c. which is a manner of speaking not unfrequent in Scripture, to signify, that he hath no pleasure in such things. The glory that he intends for this latter house, is of another nature. It shall consist in the presence of Him, who is described as *the desire of all nations*, *ver. 7.* and as *peace*, *ver. 9.*—and, or *for in this place will I give peace.* This glory they were not to expect immediately; great revolutions must first happen in the world; *ver. 6.* *After one [kingdom] it is a little while; and [or after that] I will shake the heavens, &c. and the desire [or expectation] of all nations shall come; namely, into this house; which shall be the filling—the completion of its glory.* Thus the Hebrew should be Englished; and thus a date of time is fixed for the performance of the promise.

The Persian kingdom under which they lived was now subsisting; and, after one other kingdom, which should succeed that in dominion over them, it should be but a little while before God would shake the heavens, &c. that is, the whole Gentile world, or empire, to make way for the coming-in of the desire of all nations. Great changes in the political world are commonly foretold in Scripture under the figure of earthquakes; such were the commotions in the Roman empire from the death of Julius Cæsar to the birth of Christ, which wasted all the provinces of the nation, and ended in a change of the Roman government, great enough to answer the description of it in Haggai.

For the farther clearing of the prophecy it should be shewn, *first*, that the desire of all nations is spoken of a person desired, not of things desirable, as some of the Jews understand it; *secondly*, that this person is the Messiah; and *thirdly*, that this person was to come under the temple that they were then building.

I. As to the first, we may observe, that if *things*, and not a *person* was meant, the expression *shall come* is absurd; for things cannot be said to come,—which is a personal action, but to be brought. The application of the words to a person is natural and easy. The presence of one of high dignity gives honour and glory to the meanest cottage. It was the symbol of God's presence in Solomon's temple that was truly its glory; and it is the restoring of this glory in the days of the Messiah, which, in the judgment of many Jews, is to make out the glory of another temple. Whomsoever God shall visibly manifest himself upon, may in some sense be called

10 ¶ In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,

the glory of God; and should he do this most gloriously in the person of the Messiah, the Jews would own that his presence in the temple would be the glory of it, if you would grant, at the same time, that he was not yet come: but come, or not come, makes no alteration in the case. He that would be the glory of the third temple, by coming to it, was so to the second temple, if he honoured it with his presence. The words, then, do well bear the sense of *person*; which moreover agrees perfectly with the context. "Be ye not troubled (says the prophet) that this house is "in your eyes as nothing in comparison of the former. "All its deficiencies shall be compensated hereafter, by "His coming to it, whom your fathers desired to see, and "did not see, under Solomon's temple; and who shall "therefore make this temple far more illustrious than "that." And thus the prophet himself seems to interpret his meaning; for, repeating the same political concussion, ver. 21, 22. *I will shake the heavens*, &c. he tells them, that this was in order to make room for one, under the name of Zerubbabel, whom *God would take, and make as a signet*, or exalt to most high dignity, power, and trust, of which the *seal* was the instrument or sign in those days. Where the same revolution is spoken of, the same person was probably intended; the one passage is parallel to the other. So again, should the word *peace*, ver. 9. which God promises to give *in this place*, be understood of *external* peace and felicity, it will be hard to say how this was fulfilled, or could give the preference of the latter house to the former: for all the time under the second temple was troublesome and unquiet; far short of the halcyon days which they had enjoyed under Solomon: but, take it figuratively for a *person*, who publishes glad tidings of peace and salvation, whose doctrine and example tended to an universal peace throughout the world, and was always followed with *internal* and everlasting peace to those who obeyed him,—and there is no comparison between the two temples; no more than between the outward tranquillity of a short reign, and the peace of God which exceeds all that we can desire.

II. Who this person should be, is the *second* consideration: and he may easily be known by the application of the same, or synonymous epithets, in other prophets. From Abraham's days a seed was promised, in *whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed*. The promise was renewed to Isaac, afterwards to Jacob, who restricted it to one of Judah's posterity, to *Shileb*, who was foretold to be the *gathering of the people*; or, as the Hebrew word is rendered by the ancient versions and Jewish commentators, the *expectation of the people*. When God confined it to one family, of the tribe of Judah, to David's seed, David foretels of him by the Spirit, that *all the families of the earth*, as the Greek interpreters read, *shall be blessed in him*; *all nations shall call him blessed*. This was not Solomon; for of the same *rod of Jesse* Isaiah prophesied, chap. xi. 10. that *to him shall the Gentiles seek*; or, as the LXX, *in him shall they hope*—and *his peace shall be glorious*: and again, where our translation hath it, *the isles shall wait for his law*, meaning the Messiah, ch. xlii. 4. it

is in the Greek, *In his name shall the Gentiles hope*. And as to Israel, it is implied that he was once their *desire*, till he appeared without the pomp and splendour of a prince, which they expected from him; and then *they saw no beauty, that they should desire him*, Isa. liii. 2. Hence it appears, that the *expectation*, the *hope*, the *desire of all nations*, and of Israel in particular, was a known description of some *person*, delivered from one prophet to another, and which, after the captivity, was fixed on the Messiah. Compare the present passage with Malachi, iii. 1. in which the quality of the persons, and the place, so exactly agree, that one must think with R. Aben Ezra, that the same person is meant by both prophets; who is no other than the Lord Messiah, who in the days of Jesus Christ was usually termed, *the hope—the blessed hope—the hope of Israel—the hope of the promise of the twelve tribes—the blessing of Abraham to the Gentiles*, &c. 1 Tim. i. 1 Titus, ii. 13. Acts, xxviii. 20. xxvi. 7, 8. Gal. iii. 14. Accordingly, the Jews about Christ's time interpret this text in Haggai of the Messiah. Akiba, who might be born under the second temple, and was chief rabbi and counsellor to Barcochba in Trajan's reign, understands it so; as does the Targum on Isai. iv. 2. Not to search after more authorities, we may acquiesce in the confession of Jarchi, who asserts that the ancients expounded this place of the Messiah. The other word *peace* is also a name of the Messiah; and as it includes in the notion thereof all kinds of happiness, it seems to be the reason why he is the desire of all nations; even because he shall be the blessing of all nations. However that be, this is one among the other lofty titles of the Messiah in Isai. ix. 6. *Prince, Peace*, as the words may be rendered in apposition. Of the governor that should come forth out of Bethlehem, it is said, Micah, v. 2—5. that *he should be the peace*; and the Jew's own paraphrase hereof is, *The Messiah shall be our peace*. Under this title the Jews pray for him in their liturgy, when they say, "Cause to come unto us, *blessing* " and *peace* quickly.—Give *peace, good, blessing*, &c. to us " and thy people, &c." Add to this, that the Messiah is spoken of in other places of Scripture by the name of the glory of the Lord, Isai. xl. 5. lx. 1, 2. and then nothing is wanting to prove, that the person whose coming shall make the latter house glorious must be the Messiah.

III. This interpretation is farther strengthened, *thirdly*, from the expectation that the Jews generally had of the Messiah's coming before the end of the second temple, into which the person prophesied of by Haggai, was to come. To this purpose are several of their traditions: "The second temple shall continue to the age to come, " and the days of the Messiah." And, "on the day the " temple was destroyed, the Messiah was born:" And to guard against the argument which may be formed against them from this concession, they have invented an idle story, that the Messiah was indeed born under the second temple; but is hidden at Rome, till God shall permit him to reveal himself. Very remarkable is the saying of Rabbi Jose, who lived at the destruction of the temple by Titus, and,
grieving

11 Thus saith the LORD of Hosts; Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying,

12 If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No.

13 Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean.

14 Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation, before me, saith the LORD; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean.

15 And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the LORD:

16 Since those days were, when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the press-fat for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty.

17 I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith the LORD.

18 Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the found-

grieving at the sight thereof, exclaimed, "Alas! the time of the Messiah is past."

They never dreamed then of a third temple; much less did they infer it from Haggai, who says directly the contrary. Haggai's temple is plainly the same that they then saw, and which was in their eyes as nothing; for he adds, for their comfort, *I will fill this house with glory—this latter house—this place, with peace.* There had been at that time but two houses: Solomon's, which was the former, was no longer in being: Zerubbabel's, which is the latter, was now building, unlike to the former in magnificence, and yet promised to exceed it in glory. Nothing can be plainer than that into this house the desire of all nations was to come; that while this temple was standing he was to appear in this place, and manifest forth his glory. Within this compass of time none else came, whom these titles fitted, besides Jesus Christ, in whom the Logos, or Word, tabernacled, or placed his shechinah, and whose glory they beheld, as of the only begotten of the Father. John, i. 14. See Bishop Chandler's Defence, p. 71, &c. The reader will also find in Dr. Sharpe's Sermon on the Rise and Fall of Jerusalem, p. 36. some good remarks on the subject.

Ver. 10—14. In the four-and-twentieth day, &c.] Three months after they had begun to build the temple, Haggai receives orders from the Lord, to go and propose two questions to the priests, respecting the ceremonies of the law; in order from their answer to draw instruction for the princes and the people. He first asks, whether the sanctified flesh of a sacrifice which a man carried in the lap of his garment, communicated its sanctity, and rendered the things which he approached and touched with it incapable of being indifferently employed. The priests answer in the negative; upon which the prophet asks again, ver. 14. whether a man, who is polluted by having attended a funeral, if he touches any thing eatable, does not communicate his pollution, so as that those who are clean can no longer use it. The priests reply, that the man thus polluted renders whatever he uses or touches unclean: the prophet then in the next verse, in the name

of Jehovah, applies this their last answer to the present state of the people: "As a man polluted communicates his pollution to whatever he touches; so, whatever you have hitherto done, and whatever you have offered to me in this temple, hath been polluted in my sight. In vain have you offered to me sacrifices, to avert my anger from your land, and engage me to restore its fertility; I have been deaf to your vows, I have turned away mine eyes from your oblations. You have been smitten with the scourge of my displeasure until now; but inasmuch as you have at length begun to set about my temple, you shall soon behold the effects of my blessings upon you. I will restore fruitfulness to your fields, your vineyards and your olive-trees." See ver. 19. God, to adapt himself to the grossness of the people, and render them more sensible of the fault that they had committed in thus neglecting the re-establishment of his house, observes, that he hitherto considered them all as men defiled by the touch of a dead body, since, instead of exciting his mercy by their offerings, they had only communicated their pollutions to the temple, altar, and victims. See Calmet.

Ver. 16. Since those days, &c.] The prophet is here speaking of the dearth and famine consequent upon their neglect of building the temple. The present verse is very elliptical; if the first clause were to be explained by the second, which it reasonably may, it should be rendered, *When one came to an heap for twenty measures; that is to say, when a person came to a heap of corn, to draw out twenty measures from it, it was found so deficient, as to supply only ten.* Such also was the case with respect to those who came to draw out fifty measures of wine from the wine-press. Dr. Gill explains it, "When the husbandman, having gathered in his corn, who is generally a good judge of what it would yield, came to a heap of it on his corn floor, either of sheaves unthreshed, or of corn unwinnowed, and expected that it would have produced at least twenty measures, after it was threshed and winnowed; to his great disappointment he had but ten out of it."

Ver.

dation of the LORD's temple was laid, consider it.

19 Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig-tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive-tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you.

20 ¶ And again the word of the LORD came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying,

21 Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth;

Ver. 18. Upward] Forward.

Ver. 19. Yea, as yet the vine, &c.] Have the vine, &c. yet brought forth nothing. Houbigant. From this day have I blessed you. The prophet makes a comparison between the dearth which preceded the building of the temple, and the fertility following, while the temple was building; and if there were not a present fertility, and already begun, there could be no place left for a comparison.

Ver. 21. Speak to Zerubbabel, &c.] See this passage explained in the note on ver. 6, &c.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Having set themselves heartily to their work, God encourages them by a second message, about a month after the former, to proceed in the building. Some, probably who had seen the former temple, which had been destroyed about seventy years, beheld with grief the present structure, so little comparable to that for magnificence; and perhaps discouraged the hearts of the builders, suggesting what an insignificant house this would be; but God bid the prophet say, *Be strong, O Zerubbabel and Joshua, and all ye people of the land, and work, nor be disheartened at any obstacles.* And he suggests, for this purpose, the most reviving grounds of encouragement.

1. *God will be with them* with his special presence, and the comforts of his Spirit, according to his covenant when he brought them out of Egypt, and took them for a peculiar nation to preserve his name: therefore they need not fear, success should crown their labours. The Spirit of Jehovah, the Spirit of wisdom and might, should be their guide, their stay and consolation; and if he be with us, then shall we be strong.

2. In this temple shall the Messiah incarnate appear, and give it far greater glory than ever Solomon's temple could boast of: *Yet once, it is a little while* before this shall come to pass; for though the coming of Christ was distant five hundred years, it was a little while in God's sight, or compared with the time since the first promise had been given; and yet once may have reference to God's appearance on Sinai, when he revealed himself in such tremendous majesty, *shaking the heavens and the earth*, as now should again be done. Before the coming of Christ, the nations and all their rulers had been shaken in pieces as by an earthquake, through the prevalence of the Roman arms; and when Christ appeared, his Gospel made a shaking among the nations, awakening the consciences of

22 And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother.

23 In that day, saith the Lord of Hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of Hosts.

men, and changing their natures; destroying and silencing the oracles of the heathen, and abolishing all the ceremonial institutions, Heb. xii. 27. *And the desire of all nations shall come;* He, whose salvation is to extend to all nations, the desirable object which every miserable sinner so greatly needs, and whom all should long for as their only hope and refuge; *and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord,* by the presence of the incarnate Jehovah, which should far exceed in glory the Shechinah of old. It is true they might say, that their treasures were utterly insufficient to adorn the temple, as it had been overlaid by Solomon with gold; but God anticipates the objection. *The silver is mine, and the gold is mine,* these were his own before Solomon bestowed them on his building; and he could, if he had pleased, have given them enough to have done so likewise; but his glory was not by these exalted. *Far greater should be the glory of this latter house than of the former;* though neither ark, nor shechinah, nor urim and thummim, nor celestial fire was there; the fulness of the Godhead bodily resident in Jesus should far surpass all these; and the miracles that he wrought, and the Gospel that he declared, exalted the latter house far above the former: *and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts;* not temporal peace, for under the second temple the Jews enjoyed little of that, but spiritual peace, which Jesus the Prince of Peace came to purchase, preach, and communicate to all his believing people.

2dly, The discourse contained in the 10th and following verses is designed,

1. To humble them under a sense of their pollution and sinfulness; and in order hereunto the prophet is sent to inquire of the priests, not so much for his information, as their conviction. He puts two questions to them concerning the law, of which they were the expounders, [1.] Whether a person carrying holy flesh in his garment, sanctified by the touch of it any common meat? to which they answered, No; for though the garment must be washed before it could be employed in common uses, Lev. vi. 27. yet it communicated no virtue to what it touched. [2.] Whether, if a person unclean touched any of these, it should be unclean? they said, *It shall be unclean,* Num. xix. 22. so much more easily is pollution communicated than purity. Then answered Haggai, applying the case to the priests and people, *So is this nation before me, saith the Lord;* their ritual devotions and services, like

like the garment carrying holy flesh, could not sanctify; while their hearts being unclean, every thing they touched received defilement; and especially, as seems to be the intention of the prophet to shew, was this the case with them while they neglected the building of God's house; and this they are called upon to *consider*, and lay to heart, that, in their reflections on the past, they might lie low before God, *from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the Lord*; from that day, when they left off the work about seventeen years before, they had been under the constant marks of God's displeasure, the sure proof of their sins. Their harvest had failed their expectations; the heap of corn which should have yielded twenty measures, when it came to be threshed gave but ten; and when from the quantity of grapes that he put into the press, the vine-dresser hoped to draw out fifty measures, *there were but twenty*. *Blasting, mildew, and hail*, destroyed the fruits of the earth; *yet ye turned not to me, saith the Lord*, continued unhumiliated under those providences, and resumed not the work of the sanctuary: all which they should remember, and humble their souls before the Lord.

2. To encourage them, he bids them observe, from the day forward that they began to turn to God, and set themselves heartily to his neglected service, what a blessed alteration would appear. *Is the seed yet in the barn?* No: they had just sown it, and it was not yet come up, and uncertain what harvest it would produce; their fruit-trees, it being winter, were now bare; but, saith God, *from this day will I bless you with plenty of all good things,*

and to their full conviction demonstrate how much they consulted even their own advantage in returning to his work and service. *Note*; They who faithfully apply themselves to God's work shall assuredly find his blessing, sometimes in providential gifts of this world's goods, but always in the comfort that he will bestow upon their souls.

3dly, The same day in which Haggai had delivered the above mentioned message to the people in general, he is sent to Zerubbabel in particular, with encouragement to him under the difficulties of his office, and the dangers to which he saw himself and the nation exposed from their weakness and the powerful nations around them.

1. He may expect to see strange revolutions, like the shakings of heaven and earth. *The throne of kingdoms, the Persian monarchy, would be overthrown, and the kingdoms of the heathen be destroyed, with their chariots and horsemen, every one by the sword of his brother*; which may include the successive monarchies, the Grecian and Roman, and be extended to all the enemies of Christ's church and people to the end of time.

2. Zerubbabel shall be protected and defended in the midst of these commotions; or rather the promise respects his glorious descendant the Messiah, of whom he was the figure. He is emphatically the *servant* of the Lord, raised up to do his pleasure. *I will make thee as a signet, for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of Hosts*; he is the elect of God, in whom his soul delighteth, precious as a signet, and intrusted with all power in heaven and in earth. See the note on ver. 6, &c.

THE BOOK
OF THE
PROPHET ZECHARIAH.

ZECHARIAH returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel, and began to prophesy in the second year of the reign of Darius, son of Hystaspes; in the year of the world 3484, before the Vulgar Æra 520, in the eighth month of the holy year, and two months after Haggai had begun to prophesy. These two prophets, with united zeal, encouraged at the same time the people to go on with the work of the temple. Zechariah is the longest and most obscure of all the twelve lesser prophets. His style, says Bishop Lowth, is rather prosaic, unless towards the end, where it is elevated, poetical, and, considering his obscurity in other passages, sufficiently clear. His prophecies concerning the Messiah are more particular and express than those of many other prophets. See on chap. xi. 12. As the prophetic spirit was to cease in this and his contemporary prophets, till a greater prophet, the Messenger of the covenant, was to arise, it was highly becoming the mercy of our paternal Creator, to grant clearer and more explicit revelations of his Son than any which had yet preceded: and even the suspension of prophecy for so long a series of years is an argument both of the wisdom and goodness of God; as by that means he removed all doubt concerning him who was to come, and rendered him more conspicuously remarkable. See Calmet, and Bishop Lowth's 21st Prelection.

C H A P. I.

Zechariah exhorteth to repentance. The vision of the horses. At the prayer of the angel, comfortable promises are made to Jerusalem. The vision of the four horns, and the four carpenters.

[Before Christ 520.]

IN the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD

unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying,

2 The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers.

3 Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of Hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of Hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of Hosts.

C H A P. I.

THE first six verses of this chapter contain a separate and distinct revelation, but at the same time connected with the general purport and design of the visions that follow, to which it forms a suitable introduction. The people of the Jews were dispirited with the recollection of their past sufferings, and a sense of their present weak and dependent state. The divine wisdom thought meet to rally their courage, and animate them to the undertaking of what was

necessary for the restoration of their affairs, and particularly to a vigorous prosecution of the building of the temple already in hand, by holding forth to them a prospect of better times. Accordingly, they are assured that God was now ready to restore them to favour, and accumulate his blessings upon them, provided they would turn to him, and not provoke his judgments, as their fathers had done, by wilful disobedience.

Ver. 1. In the eighth month] Zechariah begins his prophecy

4. Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the LORD of Hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and *from* your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the LORD.

5 Your fathers, where *are* they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?

6 But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? and they returned and said, Like as the LORD of Hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us.

7 ¶ Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which *is* the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Be-

rechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, 8 I saw by night, and behold, a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle-trees that *were* in the bottom; and behind him *were there* red horses, speckled, and white.

9 Then said I, O my lord, what *are* these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these *be*.

10 And the man that stood among the myrtle-trees answered and said, These *are they* whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth.

11 And they answered the angel of the LORD that stood among the myrtle-trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest.

12 ¶ Then the angel of the LORD answered

phesy with an exhortation to the people to be converted to the Lord, and not to imitate the stubbornness of their forefathers. Three months afterwards, ver. 7. the Lord caused to appear to him an angel on horseback in the midst of a myrtle grove, standing by the side of a river. Several other angels come to the first, and acquaint him, that the whole country was at peace and abounded with inhabitants. He thence takes occasion to intreat the Lord, that he would have compassion on the cities of Judah. The Lord gives him a gracious and comfortable answer, and complies with his request. Then the prophet saw *four horns*, ver. 18. and four men going to break them with hammers; and he was told that these four horns denoted so many powers which had oppressed his people; but that the time was come wherein they should be overthrown, and broken to pieces. See Calmet.

Ver. 5. *Your fathers, where are they?*] This question signifies that the sepulchre of their fathers was not in Judæa, because they died captives in a foreign land; which was a great disgrace to the children. The question therefore, *Where are they?* does not mean that they were dead; for it could not by any means be considered as a punishment that the fathers of those whom Zechariah addresses were dead, after the space of seventy years. Prophets had never been wanting in Israel, till the time of the return from the Babylonish captivity. After Zechariah and Malachi, they ceased till Christ was born. The prophet therefore, by the next question, *And the prophets, &c.* implies, that in a short time it should come to pass, that God would send no more prophets to his people. See Houbigant.

Ver. 6. *But my words, &c.*] Certainly, my words and my decrees, which I commanded, &c. happened to your fathers; who when they repented, said, &c. Houbigant.

Ver. 7. *Upon the four-and-twentieth, &c.*] The second revelation, made to Zechariah about three months after the first, contains eight distinct visions following each other in

the same night. The first vision is of an angel in a human form, sitting on horseback in a low valley among myrtle-trees, attended by others upon horses of different colours. The prophet asks the meaning, and is informed that they were the ministers of Providence, sent to examine into the state of the whole earth, which they report to be quiet and tranquil. The angel hereupon intercedes for Judah and Jerusalem, which he represents as having suffered under the divine indignation seventy years. He receives a consolatory answer. The prophet is directed to proclaim, that God's wrath against Judah was at an end; that he would cause the temple and Jerusalem to be rebuilt, and would fill the country with good, as a token and consequence of his renewed favour, ver. 7—17.

Sebat] This month corresponded with the latter end of January and the beginning of February.

Ver. 8. *I saw by night*] *I saw this night, &c.* A red horse is an emblem of war and destruction. The man or angel riding upon him is thought by some to have been the archangel Michael, prince and protector of the people of God. Others suppose that the *Logos*, or Son of God, is meant, who appeared as the captain of the hosts or armies of God. See the note on chap. ii. 3. He appeared in-obscurity, in a low place, amid myrtles planted by the waters; as it were to mark out the affliction, humiliation, and sorrow, to which his country was reduced. The Hebrew may be rendered, *Among the myrtle-trees planted by the waters.* The myrtle flourishes best in shady and watery places; *Littora myrteis latissima*, says Virgil. See Calmet. Instead of *speckled*, Houbigant reads *grey*.

Ver. 9. *The angel that talked with me*] This was another heavenly minister, sent probably to present the visions to the prophet's imagination, as well as to explain them. Vitringa styles him, *Angelus comes et interpret*, "the accompanying and interpreting angel;" and under his direction the prophet receives satisfactory information.

Ver. 11. *We have walked, &c.*] This passage answers

and said, O LORD of Hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?

13 And the LORD answered the angel that talked with me *with* good words and comfortable words.

14 So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the LORD of Hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.

15 And I am very sore displeased with the heathen *that are* at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction.

16 Therefore thus saith the LORD; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of Hosts,

and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem.

17 Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the LORD of Hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.

18 ¶ Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold, four horns.

19 And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What *be* these? And he answered me, These *are* the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.

20 And the LORD shewed me four carpenters.

21 Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These *are* the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man

to that opinion of the Hebrews, that every province had its guardian angel. The angels subordinate to the principal one, among the myrtle-trees, report to him, that all the parts of his government are inhabited, and at rest. Instead of, *Through the earth, and all the earth*, it should be rendered, *Through the land, and all the land*. After the return from the captivity this province was re-peopled, and enjoyed at the commencement of the reign of Darius a profound peace.

Ver. 15. I am very sore displeased, &c.] I am very sore displeased with the nations who despise her, and who, after I had moderated my anger, have added to her affliction. Houbigant. This may be understood of the Babylonians, Samaritans, and other neighbours of the Jews, who had not been made such terrible examples of God's vengeance as the Jews. See Job, xliii. 7.

Ver. 17. My cities, &c.] My cities shall yet abound with good. Houbigant, and others.

Ver. 18. Behold, four horns.] In this second vision, under the emblem of four horns, is represented, that God, by such agents as he would appoint, would quell and bring down all those powers which had risen, or should rise, to oppress his people. Horns are an usual emblem of strength and power; and because those fierce beasts that have them, push and gore with them, and, tossing them furiously about, scatter and drive all before them, they aptly denote conquering and oppressive princes and states. See Dan. vii. viii. But whether the number *four* is used indefinitely, or to denote that specific number, and, if the latter, what particular Powers are pointed out by it, is a question that has been much agitated, but not satisfactorily determined. Several quaternions have been named, but with no other effect than to make the matter more doubtful. The most ancient and prevailing opinion among the Jews themselves, and perhaps the most probable of any, is, that the four great empires, the Assyrian or Babylonian, the Persian, Grecian, and Roman, which most certainly were alluded to by the four beasts in the seventh chapter of Daniel, and I think are designed by the four chariots in the last of these eight visions, chap. vi. are here likewise intended; by each

of which the Jewish nation has been in turns oppressed, and all of them have been successively brought down, and annihilated; although from the depression of the last the Jews have not as yet apparently derived any considerable advantage.

Ver. 20. Four carpenters.] Or as many subverters of the kingdoms as the kingdoms were which had oppressed the Jews. The word *חרש* *choresh*, signifies a mechanic, or artificer in brass, iron, wood, stone, &c.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The prophet Zechariah received his commission from God, and began to speak about two months after Haggai. He is called the son of Berechiah; and was the same, as some suppose, whom our Lord mentions, Matt. xxiii. 35. as slain between the porch and the altar, *the son of Iddo the prophet*, which may refer to Zechariah, and not his grandfather; or he might be a prophet also. He begins his discourse,

1. With reminding the Jews of the sins and provocations of their forefathers, with whom God was highly displeased, and whom he had severely punished, whose sufferings should be a warning to them.

2. With exhorting them to turn unto God; and gives them the most gracious encouragement to do so, for he *will turn unto you*; and thrice he adds, *thus saith the Lord of Hosts*, to give weight and authority to the admonition, and engage their faith in the certainty of his promised mercy. Conscious guilt makes the heart fearful; and the sinner, who sees his iniquities in their true colours, can scarcely be persuaded that God can and will receive one so unworthy into his favour.

3. He reminds them of the sins of their forefathers, which had provoked God, and bids them take warning by their sufferings, and not imitate their bad examples. *Be ye not as your fathers*, treading in their steps, who, though repeatedly, fervently, and for a long season called upon by the former prophets to repent, turned a deaf ear to God's word, and hardened their hearts; and *where are they?* They went captives into a strange land; and many of them no doubt cut off in their iniquities, and were gone to receive

did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gen- tiles, which lifted up *their* horn over the land of Judah to scatter it.

receive the just reward of their deeds. And the prophets are dead also; but their words survived them, and overtook the sinners against whom they were denounced; and this in so evident a manner, that when the threatened judgments came, too late to be prevented, their forefathers, in a miserable captivity, felt that righteous vengeance which they would not believe till it took hold upon them. *Note;* (1.) The example of parents is no plea for following their ways, when contrary to God's word. (2.) We should often think of those who are gone before; *where are they?* gone into bliss or misery eternal, and we are hastening after them: *whither then are we going?* (3.) God's ministers are dying men; we should improve the season, during which they are spared to labour among us: whilst each of them, considering their own mortality, should speak as a dying man to dying men; and deliver at least their own souls. (4.) Though the denunciations of wrath do not immediately take place against the sinner, being in much patience delayed, yet, if he persist in impenitence, they will *take hold* of him at last; and too late, in the belly of hell, he will feel that wrath from which he would not be persuaded to flee.

2dly, The vision recorded ver. 7, &c. was given to the prophet about three months after the former discourse was delivered, and is designed for the encouragement of the people who had turned unto God, and diligently employed themselves in rebuilding his holy temple. We have,

1. The vision. The grove of myrtles in the bottom fitly represented the state of the Jewish church, sunk very low in the deep gloom of afflictions and want, and surrounded by the hills of the neighbouring nations, far greater than they. It may signify also the church militant in general, which through much tribulation enters into the kingdom of God; the members of which, though low, are closely united, and their graces breathe fragrance before God. In the midst of them Jesus appears, become *man* for us men and for our salvation, and going forth to fight our battles, conquering and to conquer, and *riding upon a red horse* as the captain of salvation, who by his own blood will save his faithful people, and by his power treads down his enemies, till their blood reaches to the horses' bridles, Rev. xiv. 20. Behind him stood marshalled the armies of heaven, his ministering spirits, on horses of different colours, according to the various services in which they are employed, for judgment or for mercy.*

2. The prophet, filled with admiration at what he beheld, presumes with deep respect to ask, *O my Lord, what are these?* And the angel, he that is the head of all principalities and powers, even *the man that stood among the myrtle-trees*, is graciously pleased to inform him. *These are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth, to execute his commands, and minister for them who*

* As so many commentators have given this sense to the present passage, and as their interpretation is perfectly consistent with the analogy of faith, I have therefore presented my readers with it: but see the critical notes.

shall be heirs of salvation. So kind and condescending is Jesus to the humble inquirers after divine knowledge, who cry, *What I know not teach thou me:* these he will guide into all truth.

3. He hears the report which these ministering spirits make to their King and Lord. They had discharged their commission, and report, that *the earth sitteth still, and is at rest*, undisturbed by wars, as was the case in the reign of Darius; secure and at ease, while the poor people of God are under affliction and perpetual alarms. Thus still a careless world sleeps on: but they will shortly be fearfully roused from this fatal lethargy.

4. The angel, the Lord Jesus, hereupon becomes an advocate for his penitent returning people, and cries for mercy now at last upon them, after the long time that God hath afflicted them, during seventy years; which, if computed from the burning of the temple, were just now completed: so long had they suffered the marks of God's indignation; and now he begs that he will say, *It is enough.* It is well for the church that believers have such an Advocate with the Father: and in all times of trouble we should remember this for our support.

5. An answer of peace is given to the Saviour's prayer. *The Lord answered the angel with good words, and comfortable words;* for, him the Father heareth always.

6. He communicates this answer to the prophet, to be proclaimed to his believing people for their comfort and encouragement. *Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy:* on fire to repair their wrongs, and zealous to promote their happiness. Their enemies, who now sit at ease, are the objects of his wrath: he sent them to correct his people in a little *displeasure, and they helped forward the affliction*, exceeding their orders in cruelty and inhumanity, and insulted over the miseries of their unhappy captives: but God will avenge their quarrel. Whilst on the other hand the prophet must proclaim aloud, *Thus saith the Lord, I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies:* the temple shall be built, Jerusalem be raised from its ruins, and plenty and prosperity once more dwell in the cities of Judah. *And the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, after the days of her mourning; and shall yet choose Jerusalem for his blest abode:* which was literally fulfilled in the days of Zerubbabel and of the Maccabees; but most eminently when the Messiah appeared in the midst of her, and his Gospel went forth through all the cities of the land.

3dly, We have a second vision to the same purpose as the former, comforting the people of Israel against their mighty foes.

1. The prophet saw four horns, and, asking an explanation of them, is informed, that *these are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem;* the various nations that at different times harassed and dispersed them, *so that no man did lift up his head;* so oppressed and dispirited they were, and brought so low. Some refer these horns to the Samaritans, Arabians, Ammonites, and Philistines, who gave them such hindrances in the building of the

C H A P. II.

God, in the care of Jerusalem, sendeth to measure it. The redemption of Zion. The promise of God's presence.

[Before Christ 519.]

LIFTED up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold, a man with a measuring-line in his hand.

2 Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof.

3 And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him,

4 And said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein :

5 For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.

6 ¶ Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD : for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the LORD.

7 Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon.

8 For thus saith the LORD of Hosts ; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you : for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.

9 For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants : and ye shall know that the LORD of Hosts hath sent me.

10 ¶ Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion :

temple and city. And all who set about this blessed work may expect to be pushed at by many a horn. But see the critical notes.

2. The Lord shewed him *four carpenters*. These he had not seen. Our fears of danger so engage us, that we often overlook the help provided for us. And he tells him what these came to do, *to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles*. And these may be interpreted of the several monarchies which have risen up to destroy each other ; or of the angels whom God sends to execute his judgments ; or of the four great promoters of God's work, Zerubbabel, Joshua, Ezra, and Nehemiah ; and perhaps of the ministers of the Gospel, who go forth and are strengthened for carrying on the work of God in the midst of all opposition. *Note* ; Whatever enemies are against us, we have greater friends for us : and, though fore thrust at that we may fall, in the Lord is our help, who will break all the horns of the ungodly.

C H A P. II.

THIS chapter contains the substance of a third vision. In conformity to what was said, chap. i. 16. *a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem* ; a man, or an angel, appears with a measuring line in his hand, going, as he says, to take the dimensions of Jerusalem, in order to its being rebuilt according to its former extent, which was afterwards done by Nehemiah. This is accompanied with a message delivered to the prophet, shewing the great increase of her population and wealth ; her perfect security under the divine protection ; the recal of her exiles from the north country, and the punishment of those who had oppressed them ; the return of God's presence to dwell in her ; and the conversion of many heathen nations ; and lastly, the reinstatement of Judah and Jerusalem in the full possession of all their ancient privileges.

Ver. 3. The angel that talked with me] Many interpreters have thought, that the angel who talked with Zechariah, and interpreted to him, was no other than Jehovah himself,

the second person in the blessed Trinity. In examining some passages which follow, I think it will appear to be without sufficient foundation. In the mean time, let me observe, that here he is not only called simply AN ANGEL, (that is, a *ministering spirit*, as the apostle to the Hebrews explains the term, expressly contrasting it with *the Son* ; Heb. i. 14.) but he is addressed by the other angel, not, I think, as a superior, but as a fellow servant, to whom he delivers orders, as from a common master. See the Reflections.

Ver. 4. Jerusalem shall be inhabited] Houbigant renders this, *Jerusalem, without a wall, shall be inhabited for the multitude, &c.* And he supposes the prophecy to refer to the new Jerusalem spoken of Rev. xxi. 2. to which alone he thinks the following verse can be applied ; rendering the latter part, *And within her a pillar of light*. Most of the commentators suppose this to refer to a future state of the church.

Ver. 6. From the land of the north] That is to say, *From Babylon*. See ver. 7. Instead of, *I have spread*, Houbigant reads, *I will spread, or disseminate you, &c.* foretelling the future freedom of the Jews, and the emancipation from captivity and all its evils.

Ver. 8. After the glory hath he sent me] *He that dwelleth in the glory, or the pillar of light, hath sent me*. The latter part of the verse is emphatically expressive of the tender care and paternal regard which God hath for those who love him. As the sight of the eye is, by God's care and wise providence, fenced about and guarded from harm by the eye-lids, and by its deep situation, no wonder that this admirable provision for the safety of so valuable an organ is considered, both here and in other parts of Scripture, as an emblem of the divine protection : see Psal. xvii. 8. and Deut. xxxii. 10. This care of providence for the defence and preservation of the eyesight is most elegantly described by Cicero in his second book *De Nat. Deorum*, and well deserves reading.

Ver.

for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD.

11 And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of Hosts hath sent

me unto thee.

12 And the LORD shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again.

13 Be silent, O all flesh, before the LORD: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation.

Ver. 9. I will shake mine hand upon them] I will extend mine hand against them. Houbigant.

Ver. 10, 11.] Hitherto nothing has appeared to indicate the angel to be more than what the name usually imports, an ordinary messenger of God's will, and the agent of his providence. Nor will it, I think, appear otherwise from what follows in these two verses, if we attend to the proper distinction between what the angel speaks in his own person, and what he delivers as the immediate words of God. He first begins to exhort in his own person, "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Sion, for "Jehovah hath said;" he then repeats as the words of Jehovah, "Behold, I am coming, and I will dwell in the "midst of thee; and many nations shall be joined unto "Jehovah in that day, and shall become a people unto "me; and I will dwell in the midst of thee." Having thus finished what Jehovah had spoken, he adds from himself, "Then," when these things come to pass, "thou "shalt know that Jehovah of Hosts hath sent me unto "thee;" as ver. 9. In my Reflections, however, I have considered the words in the common sense, that the reader may judge for himself.

Ver. 11. And many nations, &c.] We do not know of any cities, provinces, or nations, which have forsaken their own religion to embrace that of the Jews; but we see a great part of the world joining themselves to, and adoring the Lord Jesus Christ. The Christian religion is extending itself universally, as well through the old as the new world. The next verse must unquestionably refer to the future restoration of the Jews; and when the prophet says in the 13th, *Be silent, &c.* he considers Christ as acting in heaven; and at the same time prophesies, that he will hereafter exert himself in his holy habitation, to convert, by some wonderful miracles, the Jews and all nations to his faith. See the note on Hab. ii. 20. The author of 1 Macc. i. 3. says finely, that all the earth was quiet before Alexander. This prince imposed silence upon all the world.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The prophet had declared, that a line should be stretched forth upon Jerusalem, and now in vision it is done. And more seems intended than the mere rebuilding of this city, even the erection of that glorious church which the Redeemer of men should, in the fulness of time, come to establish in the earth.

1. The vision that he beholds is a man with a measuring-line in his hand, the same person as before, the Lord Jesus going forth by his word and Spirit to build up the walls of his church, that it may be a glorious church, in doctrine, discipline, and all holy conversation. See the critical notes; where a different sense is given to this passage, with the reasons for it.

2. The prophet, desirous to be informed concerning what he saw, asks, *Whither goest thou?* and he tells him,

to measure Jerusalem, &c. Then going forth, another angel meets him, and desires him to go back and inform the young man, for such, though a prophet, it seems Zechariah was, concerning the meaning of the vision: that *Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls*, intimating its safety, security, and populousness, replenished with men and beasts in multitudes, protected as with a wall of fire, and filled with the glory of the Lord; which, though in a sense literally applicable to that city, may be considered as descriptive of the church of Christ, when all nations should flow into it; safe under the care of Jesus, as if surrounded by a wall of fire, his people shall dwell in peace; and in his ordinances he will manifest to them his presence, and be in the midst of their assemblies their glory and defence.

2dly, Though a general permission had been given to all the Jewish captives to return to their own land, many, discouraged by the difficulties which they apprehended in resettling, and who had perhaps well provided for themselves in the land of their captivity, took no advantage of the proclamation of Cyrus, but sat down content in that strange land. To rebuke their backwardness, and to quicken their return, God sends a summons to them in all places of their dispersion: *Ho, ho, come forth.* And such is the kind voice of Gospel-grace, when miserable sinners are hugging their chains, and asleep in the prison of their iniquities.

1. They are commanded to *see* as for their lives, and escape without delay from the house of their prison, no longer dwelling *with the daughter of Babylon*, but coming to Zion, now prepared for their reception. *Note;* All things are ready, if we be ready; Jesus calls; our duty, our interest, is to obey: if we reject his word, and continue willing slaves of sin, our blood will be upon our own heads.

2. Their apprehensions of the difficulties and dangers which they may meet with are silenced: nay, where they were, they would be much more exposed; *for thus saith the Lord of Hosts; After the glory* promised, and the glorious beginnings that had appeared, *hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you*, the Chaldeans, to avenge the wrongs that they had suffered from them; *for he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye*; so tender, so careful, is God of his believing people, and so quick in his resentments of every offence given to them. *For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them*, the Babylonians, and they shall be a spoil to their servants, being destroyed by the Persians under Darius, against whom they had revolted; and should the Jews stay there, they would then suffer for their folly. *And ye shall know that the Lord of Hosts hath sent me*, when the prophecy receives its accomplishment. *Note;* (1.) The saints of God are dear to him, as if they were his very eyes; and he will suffer no injury to be done to them with impunity. (2.) All

C H A P. III.

Under the type of Joshua, the restoration of the church and Christ the Branch are promised.

[Before Christ 519.]

AND he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.

2 And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebukè thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: *is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?*

3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.

4 And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the

filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.

5 And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD stood by.

6 ¶ And the angel of the LORD protested unto Joshua, saying,

7 Thus saith the LORD of Hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by.

All Christ's enemies shall fall before him; and he will fully deliver his faithful people: and therein his glory shall appear, and his divine mission be fully evinced.

3dly, The church and the people of God are called to sing and rejoice on the appearing of the great Redeemer.

1. They shall have his presence in the midst of them. *For, lo, I come*, not only as incarnate, but in the preaching of his Gospel to the end of time; *and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord*, in his special presence accompanying his ordinances; *and thou shalt know that the Lord of Hosts hath sent me unto thee*, by experience of his power and grace upon their hearts.

2. Great accessions from all nations shall be made to the church. *Many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day*; the Gentiles being called into the fellowship of the Gospel, and obedient to the faith; *and*, thus being entitled to all the blessings of the Gospel dispensation, the faithful among them shall in the highest sense be *my people*, to serve and enjoy me.

3. The Jewish people shall be restored to their own land. *The Lord shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again*; either they shall be converted and brought into the church, which is *the holy land*; or, literally, shall at the time of their recovery at last be put in possession of Judæa, rebuild Jerusalem, and, as the followers of Jesus, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

4. Silence is proclaimed through the earth to *all flesh*. Either they are enjoined to behold with astonishment this wonderful work of the recovery of Israel; or this is addressed to the enemies of God's church and people, who will be confounded and for ever silenced in the dust, when, *raised up out of his holy habitation*, the Lord shall come to vindicate his people's wrongs, and execute judgment on the ungodly.

C H A P. III.

Ver. 1. And he shewed me Joshua, &c.] We have here the fourth vision. Zechariah relates in this chapter, that he saw the high-priest Joshua or Jesus the son of Josedech,

standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan accusing him; of which accusation Joshua was acquitted, and was raised to honour; when God tells him that he was going to bring forth the *Branch*, that is, the *Messiah*, and that he should be as a stone upon which there were seven eyes or *fountains*. See the notes on ver. 9. Joshua the high-priest stands here for the whole Jewish people. The reader is to consider that what is related here passed in vision. Satan is said to stand at *the right hand of Joshua, to resist him*; that is, to be his *accuser*, as he is called, Rev. xii. 10. So here he is represented as aggravating the faults of Joshua, the representative of the body of the Jews, in order to prevail upon God not to suffer them to proceed in the building of the temple, but to continue them still under the power of their adversaries. It was the custom in the ancient courts of judicature, for the accuser to stand at the right hand of the accused. See Jude, 9. and Job, i.

Ver. 2. Is not this a brand, &c.] "Is not this small remnant returned from captivity, miraculously rescued from utter destruction, like a brand plucked out of the fire; and can it be thought that the Almighty will not preserve them?" See Amos, iv. 11. Instead of, *Rebuke thee*, in the imperative, Houbigant reads in the future, *Will rebuke or restrain thee*.

Ver. 4. Take away the filthy garments, &c.] These *filthy garments* denote the sins and pollution of the people, whose representative Joshua was; and the *taking them away* denotes God's pardoning the public and national sins of the Jews, and his restoring them to his favour and protection. The Jews used to change their garments under any public calamity; which calamity being over, they expressed the change of their condition, and the greatness of their joy, by clothing themselves in garments adapted to their circumstances. See Calmet.

Ver. 5. And I said, &c.] *And I command that they set, &c.*

Ver. 7. And I will give thee places to walk] And thou shalt have by me free access to those that stand by; namely the angels. See chap. iv. 10. The allusion is to those walks which

were

8 ¶ Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they *are* men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH.

9 For, behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone *shall be* seven

eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of Hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.

10 In that day, saith the LORD of Hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig-tree.

were in the temple; such as Christ walked in, John, x. 23. and the pavement in Ezekiel's temple, chap. xl. 17, 18. Peters supposes that this is a promise made to Joshua, that if he discharged his office with fidelity God would hereafter give him a place in heaven, among the blessed angels, his attendants. See his Dissertation on Job, p. 292.

Ver. 8. For they are men wondered at] *Men of wonder*, is a Hebraism for *signifying*, or *typical men*; men portending future things, or proposed to others for signs and types; [τρεατισμοπο, LXX.] as *men of blood*, and *men of mercy*, are put for *bloody* and *merciful men*. Joshua being distinguished as one of these typical persons, when the prophet, directing God's word to him, who was in no sense the *branch* that they expected, adds, *Behold my servant the Branch*, it was hardly possible that they should misconstrue his words, or fancy that Joshua was principally intended in the prophecy. It appears that they did not; for their Targum, both here and chap. vi. 12. reads, *Behold the man, whose name is the Messiah; and the Branch* is numbered among the several names of the Messiah by the ancient Jews. See Isai. iv. 2. and Jer. xxiii. 5. Zerubbabel was probably one of Joshua's assessors, whom Zechariah calls *men of wonder*, or typical men: however, in the following chapter he is proposed as a type of the Messiah; as he is also Haggai, ii. 21.

Ver. 9. That I have laid before Joshua] It seems as if the prophet saw in his vision a stone or rock set before Joshua with seven (עֵינַיִם *ainaim*) fountains springing out of it, which God says were opened by himself.

Seven eyes] עֵינַיִם *ain*, signifies a fountain, as well as an eye; and there seems to be a plain allusion here to the rock which Moses smote in the wilderness, and brought waters out of it for the refreshment of the people of God; and that rock, says St. Paul, was Christ; 1 Cor. x. 4.; in speaking of which transaction the Psalmist says, *He opened (פָּתַח *patach*) the rock, and the waters gushed out*; Psel. cv. 41. Observe, the same verb in the original is used there as here: *Behold, I open the opening, or door thereof*; that is, the hole or orifice through which the fountains shall flow. Again it is said, Isai. xli. 18. *I will open rivers in high places*; where also the same verb is used. And it is said chap. xlii. 1. *In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem*. For what purpose? *For sin and for uncleanness*. This was spoken of the Gospel times; and in like manner it is here said of the same, *And I will remove, or take away, the iniquity of the land in one day*. There cannot surely remain a doubt of what is intended, nor that עֵינַיִם *ainaim* must signify fountains of living waters issuing from Christ. The living waters are the doctrines of the Gospel, and the fountains the dispensers of them, the apostles and evangelists, who are said to be *fellow-workers with Christ*, and therefore aptly represented by the companions of Joshua. The number seven is frequently

used in Scripture to denote multitudes. 1 Sam. ii. 5. Jer. xv. 9, &c. &c. See Dr. Blaney.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Joshua the high-priest is here in vision shewn to Zechariah as standing before the Lord, the angel of the covenant; and he appears the representative of the priesthood and people to whom he ministered, who were defiled with guilt, and enslaved by corruption; from both of which God here, in the person of Joshua, promises to deliver them, if they would return unto him.

1. He appears as a criminal before his great Judge, and his accuser laying heavy charges against him; but he is pardoned. *He stood before the angel of the Lord, and Satan at his right hand to resist him, to oppose him in his work, and raise difficulties to discourage him; and none more effectual than the accusations of guilt that he laid against him: but the Lord Jesus Christ is his advocate, his judge is his friend, and said unto Satan, the Lord rebuke thee, O Satan*. Which may be considered as the Redeemer's prayer to his Father, to confound and silence his malicious adversary; or as his declaration what should be, *the Lord shall rebuke thee*, and avenge this enmity against his believing people; for *he hath chosen Jerusalem*, and therefore every tongue that riseth in judgment against her, that is to say, his believing people composing his genuine church, of which Jerusalem was a type, he will condemn. *Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?* as Joshua and the people had been, when taken out of their captivity; and as all the people of God are when called out of a state of sin and guilt, in which they were exposed to the wrath of God, and sit fuel for the flames of hell. Note: (1.) None ever stood up zealously for God, at whose right hand Satan did not place himself as an adversary. (2.) They who confidently put their cause in Christ's hands need not fear the accuser of the brethren; they shall be justified from all things. (3.) The best way of answering the devil's accusations is, by looking up to God in prayer, and saying, *the Lord rebuke thee, Satan*. (4.) Every child of God is a brand plucked from the fire. How often have we stood on the brink of everlasting burnings, and lo! Jesus rescued us from ruin. (5.) The Lord's past mercies, which we have experienced, are an earnest of his present care, if we now believe on him.

2. He appears in filthy garments, as one polluted; and no doubt, as a fallen and of course sinful creature, he had abundant cause to confess his shame. Some suggest that this was on account of the strange wives that the priests had taken, and some of them his own sons, Ezra, x. 18. but he seems rather to represent the state of the people in general; however, the Lord is willing and able to cleanse him. *The angel looked on him not with anger but compassion, and commanded his attendant ministers to strip off*

the

C H A P. IV.

By the golden candlestick is foreshewed the good success of Zerubbabel's foundation: by the two olive-trees the two anointed ones.

[Before Christ 519.]

AND the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep,

2 And said unto me, What seeft thou?

And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof:

3 And two olive-trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof.

4 So I answered and spake to the angel

the filthy garments, the meaning of which he explains to his comfort, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee; the guilt of it is pardoned, the power of it subdued. God sanctifies by his Spirit all those whom Jesus hath washed from their sins by his blood, and thus prepares them as a holy priesthood. And I will clothe thee with change of raiment, that he might appear lovely, as before loathsome. And thus does Jesus adorn all his believing people with those graces of his Spirit which make them all-glorious within: and this is the Lord's doing, and marvellous in our eyes. Arrayed in priestly robes, Joshua now looks great; for, at the Lord's command, the sacerdotal mitre is set on his head, and the priestly garments for beauty and glory are put upon him: and though, from his former pollution, he might fear that he should be turned out of his office, he is solemnly confirmed in it. The angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua, saying, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, If thou wilt walk in my ways, in all the paths of righteousness and truth, prescribed in God's word; and if thou wilt keep my charge, faithful in his sacerdotal office, vigilant, active, laborious; then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, presiding over the temple and its service, and enjoying all the honours and advantages resulting from that high station; and I will give thee places to walk among those that stand by, highly respected by his fellow-ministers in the temple, or made a companion of glorified saints and angels at last, as the reward of his fidelity. Note; (1.) The ministers of God have a solemn trust committed to them, and they must look well how they discharge it. (2.) Those who are faithful to Jesus shall be exalted in his better temple, and made to walk with him in white in glory everlasting, for they are worthy.

2dly, The priesthood of Joshua was typical of Christ, the great high-priest of our profession, and from him derived all its efficacy. To him, therefore, Joshua and his fellows are directed to look. *Hear now, O Joshua, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee; for they are men wondered at for their singularity, or their strange deliverance from captivity; or men of a sign, types of the priesthood of Jesus. Note; Christ's genuine disciples are men wondered at by others for their holy ways, which appear strange to a carnal world; and they are a wonder to themselves, when they reflect on God's astonishing grace, and what he has done for their souls.*

The promise given to them is, the sending of the expected Messiah, who is described,

1. As the Branch. *Behold, I will bring forth my servant*

the Branch; the Branch from the root of Jesse, who should be born in the fulness of time; weak to outward view as a tender rod, yet filling the world with fruit: God's servant, who should fulfil all his pleasure, and perfect the work of redemption whereunto God had appointed him.

2. As the stone, the precious corner-stone of the spiritual temple, and the rock of offence to all who stumble at the word. It is laid before Joshua, that he may build thereon, as the only sure foundation of the sinner's hope. *Upon or in one stone shall be seven eyes**, denoting either the perfection of his wisdom and the fulness of his grace to discover and supply all the wants of his believing people; or this may refer to the eyes of all believers, which are directed to him, that out of his fulness they may receive grace for grace; *behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of Hosts*, alluding probably to the engraving and polishing the corners of the temple, and may signify that Christ should be adorned with all gifts and graces for the discharge of his office as Mediator; or it may refer to the prints of the instruments in his flesh by which he suffered; or perhaps to his exaltation after his resurrection, when he was crowned with glory and honour.

3. He shall save all who perseveringly believe in him by one oblation of himself once offered. *I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day*, even on that day when Jesus completed the great atonement on the cross for the sins of the world.

4. In consequence of this, his faithful people shall enjoy great peace of conscience, and rejoice together in the salvation of God. *In that day of Gospel-grace, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine, and under the fig-tree.* For, when iniquity is taken away, the soul sits happy under the shadow of Jesus, and invites all around to come and taste how good the Lord is, to join in his ordinances, and maintain sweet communion with him and with each other; a foretaste of that blessed state, *where the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep the hearts and minds of the faithful in perfect happiness for ever.*

C H A P. IV.

IN this chapter the prophet is called upon to contemplate a fifth vision, of the most sublime and mysterious import. He sees a candlestick of pure gold, with its seven lamps communicating by seven pipes with a bowl at the top, which serves for a reservoir, and is constantly supplied

* I have here considered the passage agreeably to our common version: but see the critical notes.

that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord?

5 Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord.

6 Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the LORD of Hosts.

7 Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the head-stone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.

8 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

9 The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of Hosts hath sent me unto you.

10 For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.

11 ¶ Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive-trees upon the right

with oil from two olive-trees standing on each side of the candlestick. He inquires into the meaning, and receives an answer, which, though it may in some sort apply to the circumstances of the temple then in building, yet from the solemnity of the manner, and the terms in use, must be concluded to point to something far higher, no less than the final and complete establishment of Christ's holy church, not by human means, but by the power of the Holy Spirit, surmounting all obstacles thrown in its way. Annexed is a special prediction, that Zerubbabel, who had begun, should have the honour of finishing the material building of the temple; the accomplishment of which is made a sign or proof of the divine mission. The meaning of the seven lamps is then explained, and also of the two overhanging branches of the olive-trees on each side of the candlestick.

Ver. 1. *And waked me*] *And roused me*. It should seem as if the prophet was plunged into a deep reverie, musing on what he had already seen, when he was roused again by the angel to give his attention to what follows.

Ver. 6. *This is the word, &c.*] See the note on chap. iii. 8. It appears as if Zerubbabel had been misrepresented at the Persian court; and hoping that he or his Son might prove the deliverer, of whom the prophets wrote, the apprehension of being recalled before he had finished the temple, filled him with much uneasiness. At this time Zechariah saw in vision the golden candlestick of the temple, ver. 2. which noble piece of workmanship figured out the temple service, and the whole polity of the Jewish constitution, depending on the restoration of the temple: for so Titus, to express the perfect subjection of Judæa, carried this candlestick afterwards in triumph, as the proper emblem thereof. The vision is explained to the prophet by an angel, who, having shewn him the contrivance of this hieroglyphic, and how the lamps were fed by pipes from the bowl with a secret, gentle influence, thus applies it; "This is the word of the Lord, to or of Zerubbabel: these things are not done by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." that is to say, "As in this vision all things are so contrived, that oil should not fail in the lamps, though no one pour it in; so shall it come to pass, by the immediate providence and administration of God, that the religion and polity of the

"Jews shall still continue to shine in the earth." He goes on, *Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain*. The general meaning whereof is, that the strongest opposition shall be levelled before him whom God makes his instrument. Samaria, and the opposers of the building of the temple, are more immediately meant. He goes on, *For, or so shall ye bring forth, &c.* Here the angel mixes things common to Zerubbabel and the Messiah whom he represents; or, speaking of Zerubbabel's finishing the temple, he passes thence to another Zerubbabel, who should be indeed the *head or top-stone*, the last ornament, beauty, and perfection of this building; who should be *grace, grace*, or, *the chief grace thereof*, as the Hebrews express it by the reduplication of the word. The Jewish Targum, therefore, understands the last part of this verse of the Messiah, and paraphrases it thus: "This Messiah shall emerge, who was named before the world, and shall obtain the empire of all the kingdoms of the earth." St. Jerome tells us, that the old Jews explained it so; and the ancient book *Tanchuma*, and other of their writings still extant, bear them witness; and perhaps the Greek interpreters had the same person in view, when they rendered the *top-stone* by *λιθον κληρονομίας*, the *stone of inheritance*; pointing out him, to whom of right the kingdom of the Jews belonged, and the heritage of the earth, and who was signified by the former prophets, by the *corner-stone*,—*the foundation-stone, elect and precious*. See Chandler's *Defence*, p. 203.

Ver. 7. *And he shall bring forth*] If in this prophecy not only the completion of the material temple is promised, but also, as we have supposed, the erection of a spiritual building, it is obvious, that in this secondary sense by the *head or chief corner-stone* must be understood that person who is emphatically so called, Psal. cxviii. 22. Isai. xxviii. 16. Matt. xxi. 42. Eph. ii. 20. and whose coming was ushered in, as is here announced, by the joyful acclamations of the multitudes, Matt. xxi. 8, 9, 10. Mark, xi. 8, 9, 10. John, xii. 13.

Ver. 10. *Who hath despised the day of small things*] By the *day of small things*, I suppose to be meant the time when the resources of the Jewish nation appeared in the eyes of many, even well-wishers, so small and inadequate to the building

side of the candlestick, and upon the left side thereof?

12 And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive-branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves?

building of the temple, against a powerful opposition, that they despaired of seeing it carried into effect. Such persons would of course rejoice, when the event turned out so contrary to their expectations.

The eyes] *The fountains.* Here again, as chap. iii. 9. ייניי *ainei*, I conceive, should be translated. *fountains.* The lamps considered as part of the furniture belonging to the candlestick, that is, the church; can represent no other than the ministers and dispensers of evangelical light and knowledge; in which sense our Saviour says of them, *Ye are the light of the world*, Matt. v. 14. These, taken in conjunction with their pipes, may not improperly be represented as fountains or conduits for conveying and communicating to others the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, with which they are replenished themselves. And as fountains they are said to run to and fro through the whole earth, which was in an eminent degree seen in the apostles and first preachers of the Gospel, whose sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world; Rom. x. 18. Nor is it less true of all the faithful ministers of God's word and sacraments, that they too are special instruments of diffusing grace over all countries, where the truths of the Gospel are taught and inculcated by them.

Ver. 12. What be these two olive-branches, &c.] This passage may be rendered, *What are the two orderers of the olive-trees, which through two golden spouts drain off the gold from them?* I am inclined to suppose that by שבלי הזיתים *shibbalei hazzeithim*, were meant two beings, probably in human shape, who were seen by the prophet employed in arranging the fruit of the olive-trees, and giving it a direction for its juice to flow into those channels, through which it might be conveyed into the body of the lamps, there to serve for food and nourishment of their light. Nor is it any objection to this more than to any other hypothesis, that they were not enumerated before among the objects of vision. They might not perhaps have presented themselves to the prophet's view till the very instant when he had asked the question concerning the two olive-trees; and their sudden appearance may account for the immediate change of it to another, before he had received an answer to the first. This answer being thus superseded, we are left without any direct information as to the meaning of the olive-trees; but we may fairly presume them to be no other than the two dispensations of the law and the Gospel, under which were communicated the precious oracles of divine truth, which illuminate the soul, and make men wise unto salvation. Of course the orderers and directors of these dispensations must be Moses and the Lord Jesus Christ, the two sons of oil, or anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth, fulfilling his will, and executing his commands. Of the latter of these it is expressly said, *Isai. lxi. 1. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because*

13 And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord.

14 Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the LORD of the whole earth.

the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek, &c. Nor do I conceive that any other can be meant by the two witnesses appointed to prophecy for a certain time clothed in sackcloth, Rev. xi. 3. the next verse plainly shewing that an allusion is there made to this prophecy of Zechariah concerning the candlestick and olive-trees, though it is not cited word for word: *These are the two olive-trees and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth;* Rev. xi. 4. See Dr. Blaney.

The golden oil] It should be rendered *the gold*: there is no word for oil in the original. Archbishop Newcome proposes to read *oil* instead of *gold*, saying the sense requires it. But in the Hebrew copies there is not the least vestige of such a reading, and all the ancient versions concur in expressing *gold* at the end of this verse. There is no doubt but that the liquor drawn from the olive-trees must be oil; but it is here intended to represent what for its precious quality may be denominated *gold*; that being considered as the most valuable of all material substances, but yet of far less worth than the word of divine truth: *More to be desired,* says the Psalmist speaking of it, *than gold, yea, than much fine gold;* Psal. xix. 10. And again: *The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver;* Psal. cxix. 72. In this sense then the original word may be used here for oil, and perhaps from the resemblance between the appearance of gold in a state of fluidity and oil.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Overcome, probably, with the glorious visions that he had seen, the prophet's spirits failed him, and he sunk down in sleep; but he is awakened and strengthened by the Lord Jesus, to behold other visions and revelations of the Lord.

1. On his awaking, a question is put to him, *What seest thou?* And he looked, and beheld, a candlestick all of gold, &c. like, in some respects, to that in the temple of old, the figure of the church of Christ; of gold, denoting its excellence and purity: *the braw upon the top of it full of oil* implies that fulness of grace in Jesus, of which all genuine Christians have received; (see John, i. 16.) *The seven lamps* may signify all believers in general, or the ministers of the Gospel particularly, who are burning and shining lights; and, being kindled by the fire of divine grace, are fed with constant supplies of oil from the two olive-trees, Christ and the Comforter, or the two Testaments, through the seven pipes, the various means of prayer, meditation, sacraments, &c. which Christ hath instituted as channels of conveying to us the constant influences of his grace. See the critical notes.

2. The prophet humbly inquires into the meaning of what he saw. *What are these, my lord?* And the angel, to reprove his dulness, or quicken his attention, answers, *Knowest thou not what these be?* He replies, with an humble

C H A P. V.

By the flying roll, is shewed the curse of thieves and false swearers: The prophet sees a woman sitting in an ephah, which two other women carry into the land of Shinar.

[Before Christ 519.]

THEN I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold, a flying roll.

humble confession of his ignorance, *No, my lord*: very graciously, therefore, this angel condescends to explain the vision to him; *This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel*, an illustration of what God had spoken to him before, *saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts*. As the lamps were supplied with oil, without any human assistance from the olive-trees that poured the oil into the bowl, which thence was communicated to them through the seven golden pipes, so should Zerubbabel be supplied with strength from on high, for the work in which he is engaged: and thus is every faithful soul made more than conqueror, not through any natural sufficiency of man, but by the power of divine grace.

It is promised here concerning Zerubbabel,

[1] That he shall overcome all difficulties in his way. *Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain*. Whatever opposition he met with from the Persian monarchy, or from Sanballat, and the Samaritans, it should be easily surmounted. *Note*; In the eye of sense, mountains unpassable obstruct the way to glory; but faith looks up to Jesus, the great Zerubbabel; and as he hath put all enemies under his own feet, so will he put them under ours, if we perseveringly cleave to him: and thus the mountain becomes a plain.

[2.] He shall see the completion of the work that he hath begun. *He shall bring forth the head-stone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it*, rejoicing and praising God for the ability which he hath supplied for finishing his temple. And herein, (1.) He is a type of Christ, who on the cross finished the great atonement for the sins of the world: or it may refer to the day when he shall rejoice over all his faithful saints in glory *with joy and singing*, Zeph. iii. 17. (2.) Of every faithful saint of God; who, when God shall have brought him happily to the end of his labours, shall stand forth before his throne, ascribing the whole of his salvation to rich and boundless grace, and join his voice with ten thousand times ten thousand others, shouting, *Grace, grace unto it*.

[3.] Zerubbabel shall hereby be fully convinced, with all the Jews, of the divine mission of the prophet; or rather this may be referred to Christ, who will make his faithful people know by blessed experience, that he is indeed the Saviour of the world, and that *him hath God the Father sent*.

[4.] The enemies of Judah shall be confounded, and those, among themselves, who at first were disheartened, shall rejoice, when they see the work brought to so happy an issue. *For who hath despised the day of small things?* Sanballat, and many even of the Jews, despised the mean beginnings of the temple; but they shall quickly change their mind: *for they, the Jews, who at first despaired of*

2 And he said unto me, What seeest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits.

3 Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth shall be cut

being able to finish the work, *shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel*, the building rising fast and beautiful under his direction, *with these seven, they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth*; supported by the divine providence, and instructed by divine wisdom, he shall be enabled to complete the glorious work. *Note*; (1.) The work of God in the soul begins with a *day of small things*; the light but glimmering, the graces weak; yet these are not to be despised, for in the end, if we be faithful, they shall have great increase. (2.) Instead of being discouraged because our labours have but little success, we must be thankful for that little, and trust in him who giveth the increase. (3.) It is a great joy to all pious people to see ministers and magistrates exerting themselves in the cause of God and truth. (4.) They who are under the guidance of *these seven eyes* of God's providence and grace need never despair, whatever difficulties are in their way.

2dly, Since he had found such favour in the eyes of the Lord, the prophet continues his inquiries, not to gratify his curiosity, but to furnish himself with matter for the good of his people.

1. He begs information concerning the two olive-trees, and what the two branches signify that emptied their oil into the golden bowl through the two golden pipes; and, being interrogated as before, *Knowest thou not what these be?* he again acknowledges his ignorance.

2. He is told what the olive-trees and branches signify. *These are the two anointed ones, or the sons of oil*; which some interpret of the gifts and graces of the Spirit; some of Christ and the Holy Ghost; others of Christ in his two natures, or in his offices of priest and king, from whom the golden oil of grace is poured forth; *that stand by the Lord of the whole earth*, God the Father, who governs the affairs of the world and the church in and by his Son, to whom all power is committed; and by the Holy Ghost, which proceeds from them both, and is the quickening Spirit in the hearts of all that believe. But see the critical notes.

C H A P. V.

THE visions represented in this chapter are of a very different kind from the preceding ones. Hitherto all has been consoling, and meant to cheer the hearts of the Jewish people, by holding forth to them prospects of approaching prosperity. But lest they should grow presumptuous and careless of their conduct, it was thought proper to warn them of the conditions on which their happiness would depend; and to let them see, that however God was at present disposed to shew them favour, his judgments would assuredly fall upon them with still greater weight than before, if they should again provoke him by repeated wickedness.

off *as* on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off *as* on that side according to it.

4 I will bring it forth, saith the LORD of Hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name: and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof.

5 ¶ Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what *is* this that goeth forth.

6 And I said, What *is* it? And he said, This *is* an ephah that goeth forth. He said

moreover, This *is* their resemblance through all the earth.

7 And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this *is* a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah.

8 And he said, This *is* wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof.

9 Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind *was* in their wings (for they had wings like the wings of a stork): and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven.

ness. Accordingly in the first of these visions, which was the sixth in succession, the prophet is shewn an immense roll of a book, like that which Ezekiel describes, chap. ii. 9, 10. filled with curses, and in the act of flying, to denote the celerity and speed, as well as the certainty, with which the thief and false swearer, who might otherwise flatter themselves with hopes of impunity, would be visited to their utter destruction. The next vision presents the appearance of an ephah, or measure, in which sat a woman representing a nation, whose wickedness was arrived at such a height as required an immediate check. Accordingly a heavy cover is cast upon her, and she is carried into exile in a distant land, there to abide the full time allotted for her punishment.

Ver. 1. *A flying roll*] See Ezek. ii. 9. Rev. x. 10. This *flying roll* inclosed an account of the sins and punishments of the people, and is described as flying, to denote the swiftness of God's judgments.

Ver. 3. *Over the face of the whole earth*] *Over the face of the whole land: for, on one hand, every thief shall be purged out according to it; and, on the other hand, every swearer shall be purged out according to it.* Instead of, *shall be cut off*, Houbigant reads, *shall be punished.* This *is the curse*, means that in this volume is written the curse, or the maledictions and judgments which God denounced against the sinners of the land. Calmet observes, that under the two names of *thief* and *false-swearer*, the Hebrews and Chaldeans comprehended all other crimes; theft denotes every injustice and violence executed against men; and perjury all crimes committed against God.

Ver. 6. *This is an ephah that goeth forth*] *The ephah that is going forth.* An ephah was a dry measure containing somewhat less than our bushel, consequently too small for a woman to sit in; we must therefore understand here a measure in the form only of an ephah, but of a larger size. And this is implied in its not being said in the original to be *an* ephah, but "*the* ephah that is going forth;" doubly corresponding with the iniquities that prevailed in the land, both as exceeding the ordinary measure, and also continually increasing, so as already to have risen to such a pitch, as made it necessary to repress them. *This is the ephah that is*

going forth, and such both in their extent and in their progressive state are *iniquities over the land.*

This is their resemblance, &c.] This is their iniquity through all the land. Houbigant, after the LXX and many other versions. See also ver. 8. where it is said, *This is wickedness, or iniquity*; that is to say, "This is their theft, their perjury, when they sell by a false measure of the ephah what they swear to be true and exact."

Ver. 7. *And this is a woman, &c.] And this is one woman who sitteth, &c.* This woman denotes *the wickedness, or the wicked one*, as the angel deciphers it in the next verse. As corrupt societies are expressed by harlots, and women of lewd characters; so here the corrupt state of the Jews is figured by a wicked woman.

Ver. 8. *This is wickedness] The wicked one.* That is, the wicked one representing the wicked nation. Her being driven back within the ephah denotes the check given to her farther progress; and the weight of lead, the weight of God's judgments falling upon her.

And he cast it] And he drove her back, &c.

Ver. 9. *Then lifted I up mine eyes*] There are great difficulties in explaining this part of the vision, and commentators are very much divided upon it. Calmet says, that the woman inclosed in the ephah denoted the iniquity of Babylon; the mass of lead which fell down upon her was the vengeance of the Lord; and the two women who lifted her up in the air, were the Medes and Persians, who destroyed the empire of Babylon. Houbigant however observes, that nobody has yet found out, nor ever will find out, why these women should carry the ephah into the land of Shinar, or of the Chaldees, if Shinar be understood literally, and not metaphorically. The Jews were not again carried captive into the land of the Chaldeans, after the rebuilding of the temple by Zerubbabel; nor can the Chaldeans be understood by the *ephah* which is carried into the land of Shinar with the woman who abused it to fraudulent purposes; for the ephah is a Hebrew measure; and this woman who is kept shut up in the ephah, is carried into a land not her own. Shinar will be more properly understood as spoken metaphorically of the last captivity, under which the Jews now live; being in some sense,

10 Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah?

11 And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base.

CHAP. VI.

The vision of the four chariots. By the crowns of Joshua are shewed the temple and kingdom of Christ, the Branch.

[Before Christ 519.]

AND I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four

sense, in the several kingdoms of the world, in the same state of servitude as they lived in under the kings of the Chaldeans; having their dwelling every where. There is no necessity to be anxious about explaining why the ephah is to be carried by *two women*, and not by one only, or more, for the empire of the Greeks and Romans is not denoted hereby; but two women pertain only to the parable; as it might have seemed too much for one to have carried into a distant country an ephah burdened with lead, and with a woman shut up in it.

Ver. 11. To build it] To build for her. The woman mentioned ver. 7, 8, 9. A house denotes a fixed and settled habitation. See Jer. xxix. 5.

The land of Shinar] That is, the land of Babylon, Gen. xi. 2. But this does not necessarily imply, that Babylon would be the scene of the next captivity; but only that the people in case of fresh transgression might expect another severe captivity, like that in Babylon, but of still longer duration. In this manner Egypt is used proverbially for any grievous calamity inflicted by the judgment of God. See Deut. xxviii. 68. Hosea, viii. 13. ix. 3. The last clause of this verse should be rendered, *And when it is prepared, then shall she be made to rest there according to what is prepared for her.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, A new vision here appears, big with terrible judgment against the wicked.

1. The prophet, looking upwards, beheld a flying roll, and, being asked what he saw, describes a strange sight; a roll of vast length appeared expanded in the air, and carried by the wind.

2. This is explained to him by the angel, as containing the curse, the long catalogue of lamentations, mourning, and woe, which are the wages of sin; that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth; either the world in general, where all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; or over the whole land of Israel, which seems principally intended. Note; Sinners, whose eyes are blinded by the god of this world, see no danger, and walk on fearless and secure; but the enlightened mind, that looks into God's word, beholds with trembling the wrath which hangs over their devoted heads, and wonders at their insensibility.

3. The crimes here particularly charged upon them are theft and perjury. The curse lies against every one that stealeth, whether robbing God, Mal. iii. 8. or man, their parents or others; whether in the lesser acts of fraud, imposition, deceit, and knavery; or the more atrocious deeds of open violence; and every one that sweareth, profanely, rashly, passionately, thoughtlessly, falsely, shall be cut off; God will not hold them guiltless; wrath is upon them.

4. God will himself fearfully execute the curse denounced on these criminals: I will bring it forth, saith the

Lord of Hosts. It shall not only cut off the sinners themselves, and destroy both soul and body in hell; but it shall entail temporal ruin upon their whole house, and, like the plague of leprosy prove incurable, till the whole be utterly demolished and laid in ruins.

2dly, Another vision succeeds, dark and hard to be understood. The prophet is commanded to look up, and say what he saw; but, through the distance, or dimness of his sight, he does not distinctly perceive the object, and asks, *what it is*; and is answered:

1. It is an ephah, a measure containing about seven gallons, and seems to signify the measure of the iniquity of the Jewish people. And he said moreover, *This is their resemblance through all the earth*; throughout Judæa, or through all the countries where they were dispersed, their wickedness abounded, and especially in the times of Christ the measure of their sins was filled fast.

2. A woman appears, sitting in the midst of the ephah, the representative of the sinners among them, and a lively figure of her who afterwards should arise, the mother of harlots. And he said, *This is wickedness*, intimating the exceeding sinfulness of their iniquity, who, being professors of godliness, had so grievously degenerated.

3: A talent of lead is cast as a cover on the mouth of the ephah, to shew how insupportable the load would be on the impenitent.

4. Two women came forth with wings like a stork, and lifting up the ephah, with the wind in their wings, swiftly conveyed it to the land of Shinar, or Babylon, where they built the woman a house, &c. See the notes. And these seem to represent the Roman armies, swiftly marching to the destruction of Jerusalem, and carrying the Jewish nation into a more dreadful captivity, and of much longer continuance, than they had endured in Babylon: and to this day we see them sunk under this load. Some refer this to antichrist, and his destruction: and it may well be applied to the eternal perdition of all ungodly men, who, when the measure of their iniquity is full, will be caught away from the earth, under their load of guilt, and cast down into Shinar, into the everlasting burnings, where is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

CHAP. VI.

THE main design and purport of the eighth and last vision, contained in the first part of this chapter, was to confirm the Jews in their faith and dependence upon God, by shewing them that, weak and defenceless as they seemed to be, they had nothing to fear from the greatest earthly powers, while they remained under the divine protection; since all those powers were the instruments of his providence, and could not subsist nor act but under his permission. After this the prophet is favoured with another revelation.

chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains *were* mountains of brass.

2 In the first chariot *were* red horses; and in the second chariot black horses;

3 And in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot griffed and bay horses.

4 Then I answered, and said unto the angel that talked with me, What *are* these, my lord?

5 And the angel answered and said unto me, These *are* the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the LORD of all the earth.

6 The black horses which *are* therein go forth into the north country; and the white go forth after them; and the griffed go forth toward the south country.

7 And the bay went forth, and sought to

go that they might walk to and fro through the earth: and he said, Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth.

8 Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country.

9 ¶ And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

10 Take of *them* of the captivity, *even* of Heldai, of Tobijah, and of Jedaiah, which are come from Babylon, and come thou the same day, and go into the house of Joliah the son of Zephaniah;

11 Then take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set *them* upon the head of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest;

12 And speak unto him, saying, Thus

revelation respecting a kingdom different from all the preceding, mentioned in the former part of the chapter. By God's command, in the presence of witnesses, and for a memorial to them, he places a crown, or crowns, upon the head of Joshua the high-priest, thereby constituting him a type of Christ the Branch, whom he proclaims as about to come to build the spiritual temple of Jehovah, and to preside over it, both as king and priest, for the great purpose of peace. The accession of strangers to assist in building the temple is foretold, and given as a proof of the prophet's divine mission.

Ver. 1—3. *Behold, there came four chariots*] These denote the four great empires which subdued the then known parts of the world. They are represented as coming from between two mountains, because mountains are the natural barriers which divide kingdoms; and which, though strong as brass, are here supposed to be broken through by those who invade and conquer their neighbours. This may expressly denote the narrow passage in Cilicia, through which the Babylonians and Persians, Alexander and his generals, passed into Syria, Judæa, and Egypt. These four chariots are said to be driven by four angels, ver. 5. or four princes, executors of the vengeance of the Lord. The colour of their horses is not without its mystery: the *red horses* denote the empire of the Chaldeans, bloody and cruel, particularly toward the Jews: the second chariot represents the Persian monarchy; and the *black horses* denote the sad state of the Jews under the successors of Cyrus in the Persian empire, when their enemies forged calumnies against them, and thereby put a stop to the building of the temple, and the whole nation was on the point of being destroyed by the interest of Haman in the Persian court. The *third* chariot, with *white horses*, denotes Alexander and his victories, who established the third great monarchy, and shewed much kindness to the Jews in confirming their religion, laws, and liberties. It was usual for conquerors

to ride on white horses in the days of triumph. The fourth chariot, with *griffed and bay horses*, denotes the Roman empire; and the various colours of the horses, the various forms of the Roman government. The reader will observe, that the angel who explains the vision to Zechariah, says nothing of the first chariot, because the empire denoted by it no longer subsisted. See ver. 6. and Lowth and Calmet.

Ver. 8. *Then cried he upon me,—behold*] *Then cried he unto me,—behold, &c.* “The *black horses*, denoting the “Persian empire, have appeased my wrath by conquering “the Babylonians, and by executing that vengeance upon “them, which they deserved for their cruelty towards my “people.” The word *רוּחַ* *ruach*, rendered *spirit*, often signifies *anger*. See Grotius and Houbigant.

Ver. 9. *Came unto me*] After the night on which the foregoing eight visions were represented to the prophet.

Ver. 10. *Take of them of the captivity, &c.*] *Take a gift from the captives of the family of Heldai, namely from Tobijah, and from Jedaiah, and come, &c. into the house of Jeshab, the son of Zephaniah, who is come from Babylon; ver. 11. even take the silver and the gold, &c.* The persons here spoken of were those who brought the gold from Babylon, destined for the temple. Bishop Chandler observes, that the prophet's speech is directed to Joshua only; the two crowns are put only on the head of Joshua; to him only it is said, *Behold the man whose name is the Branch*; as much as to say, “Behold the sign of the Branch whom I promised to “David in Solomon, and by the prophets after David to the “Jews, by the name of the Branch.”—*He shall grow up from under him, out of David's root, his tribe and family; and shall build the temple which the Lord delights in, and act therein both as king and priest, (ver. 13.) that there be no more clashing of jurisdictions between the two dignities. Not a word of Zerubbabel in all this; the whole action and discourse centers in Joshua. Zerubbabel was then head*

speareth the LORD of Hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD:

13 Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both:

14 And the crowns shall be to Helem, and

to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen the son of Zephaniah, for a memorial in the temple of the LORD.

15 And they *that are* far off shall come and build in the temple of the LORD, and ye shall know that the LORD of Hosts hath sent me unto you. And *this* shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God.

head of the captivity, and in right their king; but he enjoyed neither the name nor ensigns of majesty, nor had he the authority of the kings of Persia, though their substitute, to enforce obedience to the Jewish laws: such authority was not granted to the Jews before the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus. The jurisdiction being then voluntary, it seems to have lain chiefly in the high-priest, as being best able to carry it on without civil factions; and in his assistants in counsel, of which Zerubbabel was principal. At least, there is nothing said of Zerubbabel in this book but what is ministerial: and the temple being finished, his commission probably was recalled, and he remanded to Babylon, where, as the Jews say, he died. For this cause Zechariah might pass by Zerubbabel, and prefer Joshua to be the representative of the *Branch* to come; but especially, lest in crowning one of the house of David the people should mistake him for the Messiah, and raise a jealousy of him in the Persians. To provide against these consequences, he put the *crowns* on a high-priest from whose tribe the Messiah was known not to descend. Thus he was secure that they would suppose Joshua to be nothing more than a type of the Messiah; and that he was crowned, not for his own sake, but in figure of another who should in truth be king. They must be led to such a judgment, the rather from the prophet's address to Joshua and his assessors, chap. iii. 8. Joshua being distinguished as one of those typical persons meant by *men of wonder*, when the prophet, directing God's words to him, who was in no sense the *Branch* they expected, adds, *Behold my servant the Branch*, it was hardly possible they should misconstrue his words, or fancy that Joshua was principally intended in the prophecy. See Bishop Chandler's Defence, p. 200. Houbigant in the 11th verse, instead of *crowns*, reads *crown*.

Ver. 14. *And the crowns shall be to Helem*] *And the crowns shall be for the family of Heldai, namely, to Tobijah, &c.* Houbigant. See 1 Macc. i. 23. iv. 57. Though the last verse may refer literally to the Jews, and other artificers flowing in from all parts to build the temple; yet it has had, and will have, its more ample completion in the conversion of the world to Christ, that true temple of the living God. See Isai. lx. 10. and John, ii. 19.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The vision of this chapter is of very difficult interpretation. The chariots coming from between the brazen mountains are supposed by some to represent,

1. The apostles and ministers of the Gospel, going forth into all lands. The different colours of the horses may denote their various messages of wrath or mercy; their ministry is accompanied with the powerful operations of the Spirit, compared to the wind, which acts invisibly; and they are sent from Christ, the Lord of the whole earth, to the different parts of the world; and by their labours sinners are brought back to God's favour, and his wrath is turned away, *his Spirit quieted* towards them. Or,

2. These signify the angelic hosts, *the spirits of the heavens*, coming forth from the mount of God into the earth, as executioners of God's commands, and instruments of wrath or mercy according as God is pleased to send them; and when they have gone to and fro, and accomplished their ministry, God is well pleased, and his Spirit quieted and refreshed. Or,

3. These are the four monarchies, called *the winds of the heaven*, Dan. vii. 2. The Babylonish is represented by the red horses, the Persian by the black, the Grecian by the white, and the Roman by the grised and bay horses, who walked to and fro in the earth, or through the land of Judæa, and subdued it. And a peculiar notice is taken of those who went forth into the north country, *they have quieted my Spirit*, having avenged on the Babylonians the violence that they had used towards God's captive Israel. Or,

4. They refer to the dispensations of Divine Providence in general. His chariots run at his will; chariots of love to his faithful people, to whom all things work together for good; chariots of war to his enemies, whom he treads under his horses' feet: from him the ministers of Providence take their directions, and each in his sphere accomplishes the work that is given him to do, and God is well pleased in beholding the counsels of his own will fulfilled by them.

2dly, Before, God taught the people by visions; here, he teaches them by type and figure.

1. Joshua the high-priest is crowned by Zechariah with crowns of gold and silver, made of the offerings which Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah brought from Babylon, and in their presence. They who came not yet up to the temple, sent their presents thither, and with their gifts endeavoured to compensate for their absence. The crowns on Joshua were designed to intimate the union of the kingly and sacerdotal offices in him whom he prefigured, and whose name he bore.

2. A prophecy, founded on this figure, is delivered to Joshua:

C H A P. VII.

The captives inquire of fasting. Zechariah reproveth their fasting. Sin the cause of their captivity.

[Before Christ 518.]

AND it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, *that* the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, *even* in Chisleu;

2 When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezzer and Regem-melech, and their men, to pray before the LORD,

3 *And* to speak unto the priests which *were* in the house of the LORD of Hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years?

4 ¶ Then came the word of the LORD of Hosts unto me, saying,

5 Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, *even* those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, *even* to me?

Joshua. Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The Branch, the divine Messiah; and he shall grow up out of his place, from Bethlehem-Ephratah, the city appointed for the place of his birth; and he shall build the temple of the Lord, the gospel-church, of which he is the great architect; and by his power alone it is raised up and established; even he shall build the temple of the Lord; so God hath determined; and he shall bear the glory, to him the entire glory of it shall be ascribed; and every faithful member of that church will with delight cast down his golden crown at his feet; and own that he, who alone hath won it, deserves to wear it for ever; and he shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a priest upon his throne, having all power delivered to him, and able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, in virtue of the oblation once offered: as a priest, God hath highly exalted him; and as he ever lives to plead for his faithful saints, so, as their glorious king, he reigns to save them from all iniquity: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both; either between Jehovah and the man the Branch, or between the kingly and sacerdotal offices of Christ; or the counsel of peace is the Gospel, preached to both Jew and Gentile, and uniting them together in love. And the crowns shall be to Helen, and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen the son of Zephaniah, for a memorial in the temple of the Lord, either for a constant testimony of the generous liberality of these good men; or to put the people in mind of him who should come, and to whom the crowns particularly referred. And they that are far off shall come, either the Jews yet in Babylon, or the Gentiles, Eph. ii. 12, 13. who should be called by grace into the participation of all the privileges of the Gospel, and build in the temple of the Lord, as workers together helping forward the work of God; and by their labours bringing souls to Jesus Christ, as lively stones to be built upon him, the one great and glorious foundation; and ye shall know that the Lord of Hosts hath sent me unto you, the accomplishment of the prophecy would be a proof of his divine mission. And this shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God: that is to say, as many as proved faithful and obedient would be convinced of the prophet's divine authority; or if they used their diligence in building the temple, God would take care that they should not want every needful assistance. Note; When we improve the graces and talents that we are intrusted with, then God giveth more grace.

C H A P. VII.

Ver. 1. In the fourth year of king Darius] Two years after they began to rebuild the temple. See chap. i. 1. The month Chisleu answers to part of our November and December.

Ver. 2. When they had sent, &c.] Who it was that sent appears from ver. 5. where God commands the prophet to answer all the people and the priests. The people held a fast as a mournful memorial of their subverted temple: a doubt therefore arose in their mind, after the temple began to be rebuilt, whether they should yet fast; which was a doubt of such a kind, as ought to affect both people and priest, though the people might send to consult the priests. God commands the prophet to answer for the priests, and to the priests themselves. The answer is made to those who doubt: they who doubt are called the people of the land; which appellation certainly belongs to the people dwelling in their own land, but by no means to the Jews who continued among the Chaldeans: wherefore they seem to be greatly in an error who think that Sherezzer and Regem-melech were sent from Babylon to Judæa. Houbigant.

Ver. 3. Separating myself, as, &c.] Should I fast as I have done, &c. Houbigant. See ver. 5.

Ver. 5. In the fifth and seventh month] The Jews not only observed those fasts which were instituted by God himself, but likewise added others in commemoration of great calamities. The exiled Jews instituted four of these fasts; one in the fourth month, in commemoration of the breach of the wall, mentioned Jer. lii. 6.; one in the fifth month, in commemoration of the burning of the temple. Jer. lii. 12.; one in the seventh month for the murder of Gedaliah, Jer. xli. 2.; and one in the tenth month, in commemoration of the beginning of the siege, 2 Kings, xxv. 1. These fasts were observed not only in their captivity but likewise in Judæa, between the reigns of Cyrus and Darius the son of Hystaspes; the Jews therefore, as we have remarked, particularly inquired concerning the observation of the fast on account of the burning of the temple, because that temple was now rebuilding; for they might doubt whether it was not improper to retain it any longer, as the reason had ceased which gave rise to it; or whether the commemoration of past calamities was not of great utility to the morals of mankind. The prophet acquits himself with great address; he answers, that these days should still be observed, but in a different manner; not

6 And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat *for yourselves*, and drink *for yourselves*?

7 *Should ye not bear* the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when *men* inhabited the south and the plain?

8 ¶ And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying,

9 Thus speaketh the LORD of Hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother :

10 And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor ; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.

11 But they refused to hearken, and pulled

away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.

12 Yea, they made their hearts *as* an adamant-stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of Hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets : therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of Hosts.

13 Therefore it is come to pass, *that* as he cried, and they would not hear ; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of Hosts.

14 But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned : for they laid the pleasant land desolate.

not as days of mourning, but as days of thanksgiving ; see chap. viii. 19. premising some very useful observations on the nature of fasts, on the causes of the national calamities, and the manner in which they ought to behave themselves in prosperity. See Grotius, and Calmet's Dictionary on the word FASTS. Houbigant renders the last clause of this verse, *Did I command you this fast?* "Was it by my orders?—to obey me? was it not rather from private motives,—from sentiments of self-love, than those of true religion, and sincere purposes of amendment?" The question is proposed in opposition to their false ideas, that fasting of itself, exclusive of any corresponding graces and virtues, would be pleasing to God.

Ver. 7. When Jerusalem was inhabited] Heb. *ישבת יושבת*, was sitting. To sit denotes a state of permanent order and security. Hence a female figure sitting in a chair of state is the ordinary symbol on the ancient medals to represent a city or nation, whose constitution is entire the woman and unmolested. But when it is overturned and ruined, is seen cast from her seat, and lying or sitting on the ground.

When men inhabited the south] The south was the wilderness and the mountainous parts of Judæa ; and the plain, the plains of Jericho. These parts were entirely abandoned during the last captivity. The prophet in this verse manifestly alludes to what Isaiah has said in his 58th chapter, ver. 3, &c.

Ver. 10. Let none of you imagine, &c.] *Let none of you devise in your heart the hurt of his brother.*

Ver. 11. Pulled away the shoulder] They refused to obey, and turned their backs on instruction. The Hebrew *ויתנו כתף סררת* *vaittenu kataph soreret* is literally, *They gave a backsliding shoulder*; like him who offers his shoulder to carry a burthen with another, and afterwards slides from it, and leaves his companion overpowered with the weight. See Calmet.

Ver. 14. I scattered them with a whirlwind] This sublime metaphor is expressed by a single word in the original, *ואסערם* *vacsaarem*. See Archbishop Newcome.

VOL. IV.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Though we have nothing here recorded of the prophet for two years, we are assured that he was well employed, Ezra, vi. 14. but he had no commission to publish his discourses, till on the present occasion. We have,

1. The question proposed concerning fasting. *Sherazer and Regem-melech*, persons of some note, *with their men*, are commissioned in the name of the people to go up to the house of God, that is to say, by those who were situated in the country of Judæa, at a distance from Jerusalem ; to whom, in ver. 5. the answer seems to be directed. Their business at the temple was, to pray before the Lord, as the greatest of men should account it their honour to do, and to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the Lord of Hosts, whose office and business it is to explain the will of God ; and the people, even the chief of them, should with reverence and attention hear the law at their mouth ; for they who are sincere in their prayers, will be serious in their inquiries to know God's mind, that they may do it ; and to the prophets, whom God had then in mercy raised up to them, saying, *should I weep in the fifth month*, on the day when the temple was burnt by the Chaldeans, separating myself for fasting and prayer, as I have done these so many years? which now they doubted whether it were proper for them to continue, their temple being in great forwardness, and a prospect of its happy re-establishment before them. Note, (1.) In cases of conscience, God's ministers should be consulted. (2.) When God afflicts, he calls to weeping and fasting : to be stupid, or unconcerned, would be to despise the chastening of the Almighty, and provoke a heavier scourge.

2. Zechariah has an answer given him for them, and it is a sharp reproof for their hypocrisy and disobedience. They had fasted, indeed, in the fifth and seventh month, in memory of the burning of the temple, and the murder of Gedaliah ; but their fasts were mere ceremonious duties, without any real humiliation of soul : *did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?* Their eye was not single, they did not

4 N

propose

C H A P. VIII.

The restoration of Jerusalem. The people are encouraged to the building by God's favour to them. Good works are required of them. Joy and enlargement are promised.

[Before Christ 518.]

A GAIN the word of the LORD of Hosts came to me, saying,

2 Thus saith the LORD of Hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury.

3 Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a

city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of Hosts the holy mountain.

4 Thus saith the LORD of Hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age.

5 And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.

6 Thus saith the LORD of Hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of Hosts.

propose God's glory as their end, and therefore their services could not be acceptable, however long they had continued them; in mentioning which, they seem tacitly to upbraid God with not taking notice of them, and to value themselves on their performances: but their fasts were no more pleasing than their common meals, or their festivals, in which they ate, and drank for themselves, not giving him thanks, or doing him honour, or designing, in the use of his creatures, to glorify him, but to indulge themselves. *Should ye not hear the words which the Lord hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited, and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain? This was what they should have done, which would have prevented the desolations; and, in their fasts, these Scriptures should have been attended to, both as a matter of humiliation, and as a warning against the iniquities which had provoked God to destroy the land. But this they had neglected; and it is then to no purpose to fast, whilst our hearts continue unhumiliated for the sins which are the cause of our calamities.*

2dly, The examples which they had seen, and the words of the preceding prophets, should have been warnings to them.

1. The prophet puts them in mind what had been the subject of the former prophets' discourses. *Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, impartially administering justice without respect of persons, and show mercy and compassion every man to his brother, under all his wants of body or soul, assisting him with our advice, our money, our person, and our prayers; forgiving every provocation, and bearing his infirmities. And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor, whose helpless state should plead for them; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart; neither harbour a design of mischief, nor entertain an evil surmise concerning him.*

2. He reminds them of the disobedience of their fathers. *They refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, disobedient and refractory against all the warnings given them, and stopped their ears that they should not hear, not deigning so much as to hearken to God's messages. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, impenetrable to conviction, neither regarding the law of Moses, nor the words of his divinely-commissioned messengers the prophets.*

3. For these things *came a great wrath upon them, from the Lord of Hosts; and since they would not hear his calls, God refused to hear their cries in the day of their calamity; scattered them among the nations, laid their pleasant land desolate; a righteous judgment upon them for their obstinacy, impenitence, and hardness of heart. Note; (1.) They who in prosperity set at nought God's threatenings, will cry too late for mercy when it is the time of judgment. (2.) Sinners have only themselves to blame for their eternal ruin.*

C H A P. VIII.

Ver. 2. I was jealous for Zion, &c.] As a husband for his wife. See Ezek. xvi. and Hosea, ii. "I have punished her infidelities with all the severity of despised and abused love; but, though sensible of her fault, my love is rekindled towards her, upon her change of conduct, and return in true repentance to me. I have received her, and will render to her my former kindnesses. I am returning unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem." This chapter is a continuation of the preceding discourse, occasioned by the deputation of Sherezzer and Regem-melech.

Ver. 3. A city of truth] A faithful city; a spouse without reproach. "She shall be no longer an abandoned, debauched, and prostituted city; no more shall be seen in Jerusalem the worship of strange gods; the true God alone shall be known and worshipped there!" We see a shadow of this prophecy in Judæa after the return from the captivity; but this *faithful city*, in the strictness of the letter, is no other than the church of Jesus Christ;—that chaste and faithful spouse. See Ephes. v. 27. and Calmet.

Ver. 6. If it be marvellous] Difficult. Houbigant. It might seem difficult and marvellous to the Jews of those times, that Jerusalem should be called *a city of truth*, and that it should be full of old men and children, as if some great and extraordinary period was about to begin; therefore, lest the Jews should interpret this as spoken of their own times, it is immediately subjoined, ver 7. *I will save my people from the east and from the west*, to give them to understand that other times and a different state of their nation were predicted. The Jews, upon the completion of the Babylonish captivity, returned from the north,

7 Thus saith the LORD of Hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country;

8 And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.

9 ¶ Thus saith the LORD of Hosts; Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which *were* in the day *that* the foundation of the house of the LORD of Hosts was laid, that the temple might be built.

10 For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither *was there any* peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men every one against his neighbour.

11 But now I *will not be* unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the LORD of Hosts.

12 For the seed *shall be* prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these *things*.

13 And it shall come to pass, *that* as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you,

and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, *but* let your hands be strong.

14 For thus saith the LORD of Hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of Hosts, and I repented not:

15 So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not.

16 ¶ These *are* the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates;

17 And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these *are things* that I hate, saith the LORD.

18 ¶ And the word of the LORD of Hosts came unto me, saying,

19 Thus saith the LORD of Hosts; The fast of the fourth *month*, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace.

20 Thus saith the LORD of Hosts; *It shall yet come to pass*, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities:

21 And the inhabitants of one *city* shall go

north, or from the *east*, but not from the *west*: nor can any other time here be pointed out, than the last return of the Jews; when they shall flow from all parts of the world to the new Jerusalem, and there constitute a new empire; the fame of whose sanctity shall allure and draw to it many nations, as is foretold at the end of this chapter. We cannot understand this either of the Jews, or of the Gentiles, who embraced the faith upon the preaching of the apostles: not of the Jews, because the Lord did not save at that time the Jewish nation, which he was about to disperse in a very short period;—not of the Gentiles, because the *Gentiles* were not, according to the common scriptural phrase, the *people of God*—(*my people*, as the Jews in a national sense *were*,) before he had called them from the east and from the west.

Ver. 8. *And I will bring them*] A most respectable Hebrew manuscript and the Arabic version add *into their land*.

And I will bring them into their land,
And they shall dwell in Jerusalem, &c.

Archbishop Newcome.

Ver. 9. *The prophets, which were*, &c.] *Who spake*, &c. The day of the foundation was about two years before,

as this discourse of the prophet was in the fourth year of the prophet. It was at this time that the Lord began to raise up the prophets, and to give gracious promises to his people: till that period he had not wholly taken his correcting hand from them; nothing succeeded with them; the labour of man and of beasts were alike useless. See ver. 10. and compare Haggai, ii. 16, 17.

Ver. 12. *For the seed shall be prosperous*] *For the seed shall be sown in peace*. Houbigant.

Ver. 13. *As ye were a curse*, &c.] A standing form of imprecations among the heathens, who wished that their enemies might be as miserable as the Jews. This was to be changed into a blessing, to the contrary effect: "May you be as happy as the Jews who are restored." See Grotius and Calmet. No one can help remarking, throughout the sacred writings, how careful the prophets are to inculcate the moral duties, and how great a stress is laid upon them in the sight of God; insomuch that, in neglect of these, the strictest observance of external ceremonies is so far from acceptable, that it rather inhances guilt. See ver. 16. and the preceding chapter.

Ver. 17. *And let none of you imagine evil*] *And let none of you devise in your heart the hurt of his neighbour*, &c. It

to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of Hosts: I will go also.

22 Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of Hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD.

23 Thus saith the LORD of Hosts; In those days *it shall come to pass*, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard *that God is with you*.

is worthy of observation, that the prophet here not only condemns evil actions, but evil intentions; *devise not evil in your hearts*.

Ver. 20. *It shall yet come to pass*] *These things shall be when, or until the people shall come, &c.* The *until* is to be connected with the things just spoken of; that is to say, "Your joy and gladness, which shall succeed your fasts, shall continue, while many people, &c." Because the faith and conversion of the Jews in the latter days, will be to the Gentiles as a resurrection from the dead. *Hou-*
bignant.

Ver. 23. *In those days, &c.*] *Verily in those days ten men, &c.* Christians are sometimes called by the name of *Jews*, or confessors of the true religion, as being those to whom the promises made to the fathers of the Jewish nation chiefly belong. In this sense the word is to be taken here. The sense of the passage, therefore, is, that the heathen shall apply themselves to the Christian pastors and ministers for instruction, in order to qualify themselves for being admitted into the church. The *skirt of the garment*, is that mentioned Numb. xv. 38. Deut. xxii. 12. Matt. ix. 20. This distinguished the Jews from other nations, and is therefore mentioned here with singular propriety; so that the address which these strangers were to make may be thus interpreted in the letter, and with a view to the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity. "We have understood how miraculously God hath restored you to your country, rebuilt your temple, and either reconciled your enemies to you, or subdued them; and hence we are convinced that the God who foretold and wrought these things is the true God." See Ps. cxxvi. 2. Calmet, and Grotius.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, God keepeth not his anger for ever, if we will return unto him. He is always gracious towards the penitent.

1. He will be *jealous for Zion with great jealousy*, concerned to vindicate her honour, and avenge her wrongs; and therefore *with great fury* shall his vengeance light on her enemies.

2. He will *return to Zion*; he speaks of it as already done: *and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem*, manifesting his gracious presence to them at the temple, and meeting them in his ordinances; and this was most eminently fulfilled, when *the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among them*.

3. He will work a glorious change on the place and people. *Jerusalem shall be a city of truth*, eminent for integrity and honesty; *the mountain of the Lord of Hosts*, where he condescends to take up his abode, *the holy mountain*, cleared from all idolatry, and pure before God. The church of Christ is *the pillar and ground of truth*; in it all truth of

doctrine and uprightness of conversation are found; and on the heart of every living member thereof there is written, *Holiness to the Lord*.

4. He will give them long life, peace, and prosperity. No diseases shall sweep them off, nor war spread its ravages among them; but in the streets shall vigorous old age appear; and, though time has impaired much of nature's strength, the staff shall still support the hoary head; while the rising generation, numerous and healthful, shall in youthful exercises mix in the streets, secure from fear of evil. In the church are found fathers in Christ, young men and children, a multitude of converts, each adorning their place and station, and ripening for glory.

5. He will save the dispersed of Israel from Babylon and Egypt, and bring them back to their own land; and, better than all their other mercies, he will take all that will believe again into the covenant, and engage their hearts unto himself. *They shall be my people*; returning to him, he will enable them to be so, by his preventing and converting grace; and *I will be their God in truth and in righteousness*, faithful to all his promises. And this seems to have regard to all the faithful Israel of God, whom he will receive into the arms of his love; by his grace engage in his service; and, through the infinite merit and intercession of Jesus, God will be their God, to bless, preserve, and keep them, their portion and exceeding great reward.

6. However incredible this may seem, and marvellous, with God all things are possible; and therefore, strange as it is, it will be found true for all the faithful. If we can believe, we shall see the salvation of God.

2dly, We have,

1. The great encouragements given to the people who, attentive to the voice of God's prophets, laboured zealously to further the work of the temple; for they who are faithful to him, may expect comfort from him. They had laboured under many difficulties during the time when God's house was neglected; there was *no hire for man or beasts*, trade was dead, and the produce of the earth so little, that few hands were needed to reap and gather it. Their enemies on every side made inroads upon them, and robbers in their own country made travelling dangerous, and no man's property was secure: and an evil spirit of dissension and strife was sown among themselves, so that *every one seemed set against his neighbour*; but now God will change his manner of acting towards them. Their ground shall produce abundantly; and, enriched with all manner of store, they shall possess their good things undisturbed. Instead of that reproach which they had suffered among the heathen, now God will save them in so distinguished a manner, that all who beheld them would acknowledge them to be the blessed of the Lord; and

C H A P. IX.

God defendeth his church. Zion is exhorted to rejoice for the coming of Christ and his peaceable kingdom. God's promises of victory and defence.

[Before Christ 517.]

THE burden of the word of the LORD in the land of Hadrach, and Damascus

and their example and labours would make them a blessing to all around them. As surely as he had threatened to punish their fathers, and had done it as they had seen, so surely now will he *do well* unto his returning Israel. They may, therefore, confidently hope to see the fulfilment of all his promises, and should neither fear the multitude of their enemies, nor the difficulties in their way; but be strong in the assurance of divine support; and this is the powerful argument to engage all believers to work out their own salvation, because it is God who worketh in them to will and to do of his good pleasure.

2. Their duty is set before them; the same which the prophets had inculcated upon their disobedient fathers of old. *Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour*, in simplicity, putting away falsehood, deceit, and all prevarication; *execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates*: let justice be impartially administered, and seek to heal all differences. *And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour*, not entertain an ill wish, nor harbour an ill surmise against any of them; *and love no false oath*, but abhor and discountenance every thing which may lead thereunto: *for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord*, and therefore we should hate them also.

3dly, They had put a question to their prophet, chap. vii. 3. concerning their public fasts, and it is here fully answered.

1. A happy period is put to their public fasts, and they shall be turned into days of rejoicing. For now, when God will restore Jerusalem, and rear up again his temple, the memory of those melancholy scenes of desolations, on account of which those fasts were instituted, shall be lost in the joy and gladness arising from their present happy estate. *Therefore love truth and peace*; let this be the grateful return that you make for the divine mercies bestowed upon you.

2. God promises to enlarge them abundantly with multitudes of profelytes; or this has rather a more immediate reference to the times of the Gospel, when the Gentiles should come into the church of Christ. *The inhabitants of many cities*, among whom the apostles and others preached, shall become obedient to the faith, and solicitous for the salvation of others; each shall say to his neighbour, *Come, and let us go speedily to pray before the Lord*; no longer lying down in their former state of blindness and guilt, but, without delay, seeking *the Lord of Hosts*, while yet he may be found; and in fervent and importunate prayer, the language of every truly converted soul, eager to obtain mercy and acceptance before him: *I will go also*, shall one say to another, glad to join the happy company, and hastening to the courts of Zion. Multitudes

shall be the rest thereof: when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the LORD.

2 And Hamath also shall border thereby; Tyrus, and Zidon, though it be very wise.

3 And Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets.

out of all nations shall assemble for this blessed purpose and then the name of the Jew shall be no longer hated or despised; but *ten men out of all languages*, many converted by the preaching of the apostles and other ministers of Christ, shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, the first preachers of the Gospel being chiefly of that nation, saying, *we will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you*; the divine Redeemer being of the stock of Israel after the flesh, to whom it was promised of old that the gathering of the people should be, and to whom the ministers of truth desire to lead the souls that are under their care. *Note*; (1.) Every truly converted soul will delight in seeking the Lord for all the blessings and privileges of the Gospel. (2.) They who have themselves tasted that the Lord is gracious, cannot but be solicitous that others should come and partake of their mercies. (3.) A gracious purpose should be executed *speedily*; delays are dangerous.

C H A P. IX.

THIS chapter begins with announcing the fate of the Syrians, Sidonians, and Philistines, contrasted with the better prospects of the Jewish nation. It foretels the coming of the Messiah to Jerusalem, and the peace of his kingdom. The restoration of Israel and Judah is afterwards predicted, together with a series of glorious victories and great prosperity, which are set forth at large in this and the next chapter.

Ver. 1, 2. The burden, &c.] Houbigant renders these verses, *The burden, &c. against the land of Hadrach, and against Damascus, which is opposite to it. For the Lord beholdeth all men, as well as the tribes of Israel; ver. 2. Hamath also, its neighbour, and Tyre and Zidon, because it is very wise.* But Dr. Blayney translates the latter part of the first verse, *When toward JEHOVAH shall be the eyes of men*, observing—I cannot conceive how the original word can be made out to signify “the eyes of Jehovah over man,” as represented by Houbigant and the ancient versions. The order of the words in the Hebrew, **כִּי לַיהוָה עֵין אָדָם** *ki laichwah ain adam*, leads directly to our present English Translation, “when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward Jehovah.” And this plainly implies that a time would come, when men, and the tribes of Israel in particular, should turn their eyes toward Jehovah, and look up to him, either in hopes of deriving some blessing from him, or in gratitude for mercies received from him. See Blayney, to whom I acknowledge myself indebted for much assistance in my Commentary on Zechariah. This chapter begins a new prophecy against Syria and the Philistines, against

4 Behold, the LORD will cast her out, and he will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire.

5 Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited.

6 And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines.

7 And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth: but he that remaineth, even he, shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite.

8 And I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with mine eyes.

against Tyre and Sidon, which were to be subjected by Alexander the Great. The prophet afterwards speaks of the coming of the Messiah. *Hadrach* was some part of Syria, not far from Damascus.

Ver. 3. And Tyrus did build, &c.] It is very true, that Tyre did build herself a strong-hold, for her situation was very strong in an island; and, besides the sea to defend her, she was fortified by a wall of 150 feet in height, and of a proportionable thickness. She heaped up silver as the dust, being the most celebrated place in the world for trade and riches; the mart of nations, as she is called, conveying the commodities of the east to the west, and of the west to the east; and yet, behold, the Lord will cast her out: accordingly, Alexander besieged, took, and set the city on fire. The author of the *Observations* thinks that the energy of the image, silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets, is nowhere pointed out with the distinctness in which it is placed by the following quotation from the editor of the Ruins of Balbec, who, speaking of the village of Cara, says, that "it is pleasantly situated on a rising ground: the common mud, formed into the shape of bricks, and dried in the sun, of which its houses are built, has at some distance the appearance of white stone; the short duration of such materials is not the only objection to them; for they make the streets dusty when there is wind, and dirty when there is rain. These inconveniencies are felt at Damascus, which is chiefly built in the same manner." They are felt indeed; for Maundrell says, that, upon a violent rain at Damascus, the whole city becomes by the washing of the houses, as it were, a quagmire. See *Observations*, p. 96. Instead of, *Will cast her out*, ver. 4. we may read, *Will dispossess her*.

Ver. 4. Will smite her power in the sea] The Sidonians, (according to Diodorus Siculus,) on the approach of the army sent against them by Ochus king of Persia, first of all destroyed their shipping at sea; and then, retiring within the walls of their city, when they found they could hold out no longer, they set fire to their houses, and burnt themselves, with all their families and effects together. Thus their wealth was effectually smitten, when, by burning their ships, their commerce, the source of their riches, was annihilated; and their last act of desperation completely fulfilled the remaining part of the prophecy. No wonder if their neighbours the Philistines were struck with consternation at seeing the disastrous fate of those on whose assistance they depended.

Ver. 5. Ashkelon shall see it, &c.] "The cities of the

Philistines, Ashkelon, Gaza, and Ekron, shall be very much terrified at the news of Tyre being destroyed; whence they hoped for succour against the enemy. Gaza was taken by Alexander after a siege of two months, ten thousand of the inhabitants were slain, and the governor Betis dragged round the city till he expired." See Joseph. Antiq. lib. xi. cap. ult. and Quintus Curtius, lib. iv. Instead of *king*, we may read *governor* or *viceroys*.

Ver. 6. And a bastard shall dwell, &c.] And a foreigner or alien shall dwell, &c. Houbigant.

In Ashdod] Ashdod, or Azotus, was burned and destroyed by Jonathan brother of Judas Maccabeus, and nearly eight thousand of its men burned or slain. 1 Macc. x. 84, 85. These were, probably, what was meant by "the pride of the Philistines," the prime or excellency of the ancient inhabitants, in whose room the strangers were introduced.

Ver. 7. And I will take away his blood, &c.] The Hebrews had a horror of all those who ate their food with the blood: this was expressly forbidden in the law. The meaning is, that when the cities here spoken of shall belong to the Hebrews, the Philistines shall observe the law of the Lord, and there shall no more be seen among them idolatry, superstition, or cruelty. Many of the Philistines became proselytes to the Jewish religion after Alexander Jannæus had subdued their principal cities, and made them part of his own dominions. Houbigant understands the passage very differently; he renders the last clause thus: "And ye shall be left for our God, and shall be in Judæa as an ox, and Ekron as his manger." The Philistine (says he) is spoken of, in the first part of the verse, as of a wild beast from whose mouth the prey is taken: it is therefore added, that this beast shall be in servitude as an ox; and Ekron, being taken, should be as a manger, whence Judæa might have oxen to do its business; all which happened in the time of the Maccabees; but it never happened that the Philistine was a governor in Judah." However, that expression may well be justified, the prophet meaning that the two people should be so united, that the Philistine should be reckoned as one under the immediate government of Judah, partaking of the same religion, and ruled by the same laws.

Ver. 8. And I will encamp, &c.] And I will inclose my house with a garrison, that none may pass by or repass; for no oppressor shall pass through them any longer, since now I look with mine eyes. This alludes to the Maccabees, who were defenders of the house of God against Antiochus Epiphanes. They were as a wall of brass round about the temple of the

9 ¶ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having

salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

10 And I will cut off the chariot from

the sanctuary. From their days, God preserved the temple against the profanation of strangers till after the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, when he forsook it intirely. See Calmet.

Ver. 9. He is just, and having salvation] The righteous one, and the Saviour. After having foretold the victories of the Maccabees, the prophet in a sudden transport breaks forth into a joyful representation of the coming of the Messiah. *Behold, thy King cometh, &c.* namely, that Messiah so often described in the prophets as the king of Israel, and called elsewhere by the name of *David their king*. He is the *righteous one and the Saviour; the Lord our Righteousness*; who shall execute justice and judgment in the earth, and perfect the salvation of his faithful people: unlike the proud and ruinous conquerors of the earth, he shall not enter with a mighty cavalcade of horse, but shall *come lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass*. To elucidate this remarkable circumstance, which was fulfilled by the blessed Jesus when he entered Jerusalem in the manner here foretold, the learned Bishop Sherlock recurs to that original command in the law, that the kings of Israel should not multiply horses to themselves; because, being under the immediate dominion and protection of the Lord, they were not to put their trust in external defence. See the note on Deut. xvii. 16. The kings of Israel were exalted to the throne on condition that they should renounce the assistance of horses and horsemen, and depend on God for success in the day of battle. They who did so, were proportionally successful; they who did not, ruined themselves and their country. Now, in this view, look to the present prophecy: you see here, what the *king foretold* was, who was to *save* the people: consider then what sort of a king was to be expected. Is it possible to imagine that God would send a king to *save* them, who should be like the kings that had *undone* them? Is it not more reasonable to imagine, that he should resemble those who had indeed been deliverers of their country?—Kings who feared God, and therefore feared no enemy; who, though mounted on *asses*, and *colts the foals of asses*, were able to put to flight the thousands and ten thousands of chariots and horses that came against them? The king foretold by the prophet was, moreover, to be *just, meek, and lowly*: but how could he have deserved this character, had he appeared in the pomp and pride of war; surrounded with horses and chariots, in direct opposition to the law of God? Or how, as he was to bring salvation to the people, could he make use of those means which God never prospered, and which he had sufficiently declared he never would? You see then how essential it was to the character of a king of Israel, who was to be *just, and lowly*, and to *bring salvation* with him, that he should come riding on an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. But, if any doubt can yet remain, let the prophet himself explain it, who, immediately after his description of the promised king, adds, *And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem; plainly shew-*

ing that the character given of the Messiah, that he should ride on an ass, was in opposition to the pride of their warlike kings, who, by their great strength in chariots and horses, had ruined themselves and their people. To the same purpose speaks the prophet Hosea; ch. i. 7. and Micah, ch. v. 10, 11. passages which mutually support and enlighten each other, and shew undeniably what the prophet had in view, when he foretold that the Messiah should ride on an ass.—And what is there in all this to make sport for unbelievers?—Does it appear from the Jewish law, and the Jewish history, to be a mere trifling circumstance in the character of a king of Israel, whether he had chariots and horses of war—or no? Or, was it any reproach to Christ to ride into Jerusalem on the foal of an ass, when David, the greatest of his ancestors, and Solomon the wisest, as long as he was wise, rode in the same manner? Can the Jews object to this circumstance, and yet talk of the glories of David and the magnificence of Solomon, who, in the midst of all their glory and magnificence, did the very same thing?—Or, can they stumble at this character of the Messiah, without forgetting by what princes their ancestors were saved, and by what undone? See Bishop Sherlock on Prophecy, Dissert. ix. p. 379.

Riding upon an ass, &c.] The riding at all on a horse is esteemed a very honourable thing in the east. Accordingly, horses are used in no other motions there than that of walking in state, and running in full career. For this reason, Dr. Pocock tells us that the *chous* of the janizaries at Cairo always goes on an *ass* for greater speed, those creatures pacing along very fast: whereas it is contrary to the Turkish dignity to go on a horse faster than a footpace in the streets. Riding on horseback is in the Levant accounted an honourable thing; and they ride them accordingly in a very stately manner. And indeed, this has so struck some of our western travellers, Dr. Russell in particular, that they have frankly confessed, that a great man of the east, riding on horseback, and attended by his servants, has appeared much more stately and dignified to them, than one of ours does in his coach, loaded with footmen: in truth, the people of these countries must be allowed to be exquisite connoisseurs as to every attitude and every circumstance which serves to ennoble the appearance of a person, and render it stately and majestic. The prophet Zechariah seems accordingly to have supposed this sort of sensibility, when he describes the coming of the Messiah to Zion, as *meek and lowly*, because he was to make his entry on an ass: for, this attaching of stateliness and dignity to the riding on a horse obtained in Judæa before the time of Zechariah, though it had been always so in that country; the greatest personages, and on the most solemn occasions too, riding there in more ancient times on asses and mules. It seems to have begun in the reign of Solomon, in whose days we are told many horses were brought out of Egypt; and who evidently touches upon the pomp supposed to be in the riding upon

Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle-bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.

11 As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.

12 ¶ Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee;

13 When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and

made thee as the sword of a mighty man.

14 And the LORD shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord GOD shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south.

15 The LORD of Hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling-stones; and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar.

16 And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they shall be as the stones of a crown, listed up as an ensign upon his land.

horses, Eccles. x. 7. We have already taken notice of this passage on 2 Kings, iv. 24. But Dr. Russell's account of persons of condition riding on horseback, with a number of servants walking before them, is a much more perfect illustration of a passage which speaks of those that ride, as riding on horses. I have seen servants riding in state, was the declaration of the wise man,—while persons of great birth, in countries where dignity is kept up with the nicest care, he had seen walking like servants before those that rode. See the Observations, p. 284.

Ver. 10. From sea even to sea, &c.] That is to say, From the Mediterranean to the south sea; and from the river Euphrates, &c.

Ver. 11. It is more than probable, that the remaining part of this prophecy, to the end of the next chapter, relates to matters of which the time is not yet come. It is but reasonable to presume, that as the prediction follows that of the Messiah's coming, the accomplishment was meant to take place in the same order of succession. But since the time of our Saviour's appearance on earth nothing has happened to the Jewish nation in any degree answerable to what is here predicted; no return from captivity, no victories, no successes, but an uninterrupted series of misfortunes and calamities. This has been thought to favour the notion of Jeremiah's being the author of these chapters, and of his foretelling the return of the Jews from Babylon, and their successes under the Maccabees, when they had to contend with the Macedonian kings of Syria, the successors of Alexander the Great, emphatically called king of Javan, or Greece, Dan. viii. 21. But let it be noted, that the promise of restoration is here made not to Judah only, but also to Ephraim, that is, the ten tribes, who are still, we know, in their dispersions, and have never yet, in a national capacity at least, experienced any favourable change in their affairs since their first abduction. There is however good ground to expect from the writings of other prophets, as well as that before us, that the time will come, when "all Israel shall be saved," as well as Judah, and hereafter be brought back to dwell in their own land in the full enjoyment of the like national prosperity.

By the blood of thy covenant] When thou wast in the blood of thy covenant: that is, when thou wast yet wet with

the blood that was sprinkled on thee in confirmation of the covenant which God made with thee. See Exod. xxiv. 8. Heb. ix. 19, 20.—The same form of speech occurs, Ezek. xvi. 6. בְּדַמַּיִךְ *bedamaik*, "When thou wast yet in thy blood;" that is, stained with the blood of thy filthiness, like an infant not yet washed.

The pit wherein is no water] Anciently in great houses, and particularly in the east, deep dry pits, called dungeons, were appropriated for the confinement of prisoners. Into one of these Jeremiah was cast. Jer. xxxviii. 6. Here, I presume, the land of Egypt is metaphorically intended, in which the children of Israel were heretofore detained as in a prison, until God delivered them out of it, and at the same time entered into covenant with them. To this deliverance he compares that which was destined for them in future.

Ver. 13. Greece] That Javan, or Ion (for the Hebrew word יוֹן may be sounded either way, accordingly as it is differently pointed) means Greece, anciently Ionia, having its name from Javan, or Ion, the son of Japhet, and grandson of Noah, is sufficiently made appear in Bochart. Geograph. Sacra, lib. iii. c. 3. And by the sons of Javan or Greece are most probably meant here the same enemies of Israel, whose destruction is foretold, Ezek. xxxviii. xxxix. under the names of Gog and Magog; which many have understood to denote the Turks, who are now in possession of the same countries as were formerly called in Scripture Javan.

Ver. 14. Shall be seen over them] Leading them on and protecting them, as when they came out of Egypt. Exod. xiii. 21.

His arrow shall go forth as the lightning] The lightnings are represented as the arrows of the Almighty, Ps. xviii. 14. lxxvii. 17. and he is here said to go forth like the lightning, scattering and discomfiting all before him.

Whirlwinds of the south] The most vehement storms, to which Judæa was subject, came from the great desert country to the south of it.

Ver. 15. They shall devour, &c.] They shall go and subdue with sling-stones; they shall drink blood as wine; they shall be wet [that is to say, with blood] as bowls,—as the horns of the altar. Houbigant.

Ver. 16. For they shall be as the stones of a crown] Or rather,

17 For how great is his goodness, and how men cheerful, and new wine the maids.
 great is his beauty : corn shall make the young

rather, as consecrated stones. Both single stones, and heaps of stones set up by way of memorial, are frequently spoken of; and these might well be called אבני נזר *abnei nezor*, as being separated, set apart, or consecrated to a particular use. Thus we read that Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon it. Gen. xxviii. 18. And twelve such stones were pitched in memory of the passage through Jordan. Josh. iv. 5. 20.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, When God comes with blessings to his people, he will execute vengeance on their enemies.

1. The neighbouring nations, who had been such oppressors of Israel, shall be punished.

[1.] Syria and Damascus come first under judgment; on them shall rest the wrath of God, a burden intolerable; and this on account of their ill usage of God's believing people (for such he had among the Jews) whose eyes, as the eyes of one man, are, or will be, toward the Lord, crying for help. Hamath, which borders thereby, shall meet the same fate. Some apply the words to a quite different sense, and suppose that they speak not wrath but mercy: that the word of the Lord is his Gospel, which shall rest in Damascus; and many of the inhabitants, as the Israel of God, shall look towards the Lord; and this was fulfilled, when St. Paul was, near Damascus, brought to the knowledge of Jesus, and immediately preached him in the synagogues. See the critical notes.

[2.] Tyre and Sidon, though supported by every human advantage, very wise, very strongly fortified, and very rich, shall fall; God will cast her out, destroy her power in the sea where she reigned queen of the ocean, and she shall be devoured with fire. Note: There is neither counsel nor might against the Lord.

[3.] The cities of the Philistines, Ashkelon, Gaza, and Ekron, shall be terrified at their neighbours' ruin, ashamed of the confidence that they reposed in Tyre; the king of Gaza shall perish; Ashkelon shall become desolate and uninhabited, and a bastard or stranger shall dwell in Ashdod; which was fulfilled when Alexander destroyed all these places, and took the inhabitants prisoners; and afterwards the Jews, under the Maccabees, subdued great part of these countries.

2. A remnant of these will yield to the power of divine grace. Their bloody enmity against God's people, and their abominable idolatries, shall then be removed; but he that remaineth, even he, shall be for our God, returning to him in true repentance, and converted by the preaching of the Gospel; and he shall be as a governor in Judah, dear to God, and honourable as the chiefs of Judah; and Ekron as a Jebusite, or inhabitant of Jebus, that is Jerusalem; the middle wall of partition being broken down, and no difference any longer subsisting between Jew and Gentile, both alike admitted into the church, and heirs together of the grace of life.

3. God's care over his believing people will eminently appear. I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth, which literally refers to the protection that God gave them

against the army of the Greeks under Alexander, who, amidst his other ravages, favoured the Jews. And spiritually it speaks God's watchfulness over his faithful ones, who, amidst all the legions of hell, and the powers of earth combined against them, are preserved; and no oppressor shall pass through them any more, which cannot be fully understood of the Jewish people, since many enemies afterwards oppressed them; but is gloriously verified respecting the faithful Israel of God; who, being justified from all things by the blood and intercession of Jesus, are delivered from condemnation and the yoke of bondage: for now have I seen with mine eyes, which expresses his watchfulness over his believing people who cleave to him, and his delight in them; so that they are safe from all the powers of evil.

2dly, The former part of this chapter directed us to the salvation of the great Redeemer; in the latter part he appears in great humility, yet bringing joy to all his saints.

1. The adored Messiah appears; and the prophet cries, Behold him, that the eye of faith might be directed forward to that blessed time, which was now fast approaching: thy king cometh unto thee, the long-expected Son of David, to sit on his Father's throne; he is just, in himself perfectly righteous, and administering the kingdom of his grace with the highest justice; and having salvation, the author and finisher of it, procuring it by the infinite merit of his blood, and ascending to his throne to apply it to his faithful people's hearts, and make them partakers of his divine nature; lowly, humbling himself for our sakes to the form of a servant, and to the death of a slave; or poor and afflicted, as he appeared during all the days of his sojourning here below; and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass, or even upon a colt, for thus our Lord made his entry into Jerusalem, Matt. xxi. 4, 5. amid the Hosannahs of the multitude.

2. He will erect a glorious kingdom in the world, not by weapons of war, or outward force; but by the preaching of his Gospel, bowing the hearts of men to submit to his easy yoke; and under his government they shall be safe, nor need the chariot, horse, or battle-bow to defend them. And the heathen shall share the blessings of his government; for to them he shall speak peace, sending to them his Gospel of peace, and causing them to enjoy in their souls the peace of God which passeth all understanding, and making them men of peace and quiet in the land; and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth, reaching in process of time from pole to pole, especially in the last days, when all nations shall hear his Gospel, and become obedient to the faith.

3. The great deliverance to be wrought for the church is ascribed to the blood of the covenant, the blood of Jesus, which he shed upon the cross: it is called the covenant, the church's, which is composed of all the faithful redeemed, because the blessings and benefits of it are hers, through Christ, who is the great Covenant-head to his believing people; and this blood was prefigured in all the sacrifices

C H A P. X.

God is to be sought unto, and not idols. As he visited his people for sin, so he will save and restore them, when penitent.

[Before Christ 517.]

ASK ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain; so the LORD shall

make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grafs in the field.

2 For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain: therefore they went their way as a flock, they were troubled because *there was no shepherd.*

which the Jews offered of old. By virtue of this, *I have sent forth thy prisoners*; those who by nature are in a state of guilt and corruption, concluded *under sin*; but yielding to the calls and power of divine love, are quickened by the Holy Spirit through the infinite merit of the atoning Blood, to come forth *out of the pit, wherein is no water*; where they must have perished miserably, unless thus relieved. And all who are brought out thence, look back with wonder, love, and praise, when they consider the horrible pit from which the Lord hath drawn them. Therefore,

4. They are commanded to rejoice in the view of all these inestimable blessings; yea, to rejoice greatly, as well it becomes those to do who have seen the King in his beauty, and are made partakers of his great salvation.

3dly, The promises delivered in this chapter seem not so much to belong to any happy state of the Jewish affairs, as to the times of the Gospel; at least, then they shall most eminently receive their accomplishment, and particularly in the final restoration of the Jews.

1. Sinners are invited to turn to *the strong-hold Christ Jesus*, who alone is able to protect them from the assaults of their spiritual enemies, Satan, sin, and death; to save them from the wrath of God, the curse of a broken law; and to supply all their wants out of his fulness. They are called *prisoners of hope*; by nature enslaved by corruption, and condemned by guilt; their state in and of themselves desperate, and every effort to escape by the powers of nature fruitless: yet in the Gospel, hope beams into the prison, Jesus hath opened the doors by his blood, having obtained redemption from all sins for all who will repent and believe, having purchased eternal glory for all the faithful, by his grace calling the prisoners forth, and enabling those to arise who turn to him, quitting all other dependencies, and resting their whole salvation on him alone.

2. They are assured of all protection and favour. *To-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee*, twice as much as they hoped for; comforts far exceeding all their afflictions, and blessings double to any that their fathers had experienced; the spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus in heavenly things being unspeakably superior to the greatest temporal prosperity and earthly good things.

3. They shall in these last and glorious days be victorious under the divine guidance over every enemy, and be defended by almighty power, *when I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, or filled Ephraim with the bow*, strengthened their arms to bend it, and put the mighty weapons into their hands, the spiritual weapons of the Gospel, with which the apostles went forth, shooting the arrows of conviction into the stoutest hearts of sin-

ners, and bringing them to the obedience of Christ; and *raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece*, the wise disputers of this world, for which Greece was famed, as the seat of human literature and science; but all this proud wisdom shall be humbled before the Gospel-word, and the wise (many of them) made willing to become fools that they may be wise; and *made thee as the sword of a mighty man*, so piercing and sharp is the word of God in the mouths of his ministers, when accompanied by the demonstration of the Spirit. *And the Lord shall be seen over them*, as when on the day of Pentecost the fiery tongues descended upon the apostles; or in the constant supports of grace and courage he ministered unto them, and still does minister to all his servants, evidently manifesting the divine power which makes their labours effectual; and *his arrow shall go forth as the lightning*, swift shall his Gospel spread, and fill the world with its light and glory; and *the Lord God shall blow the trumpet*, his ministers shall sound a terrible alarm in the ears of impenitent sinners, and *shall go with whirlwinds of the south*, executing judgment on all who obey not his word; or the *trumpet* is like the jubilee trumpet, a proclamation of pardon, peace, and liberty; and *the whirlwinds*, the powerful energy of the word preached, bearing down all opposition before it in the sinner's heart. *The Lord of Hosts shall defend them from every foe, and they shall devour, and subdue with sling-stones*; though they seem as unequal to contend with their enemies respecting wisdom and power, as David to cope with Goliath; yet like him, these weak things shall confound the mighty, and bring the most self-righteous and stout-hearted sinner to bow in the dust, and accept the grace of the Gospel; *they shall drink deep at the fountain of truth*, and of the consolations of the Spirit, and *make a noise as through wine*, full of joy and thankfulness, and songs of praise; and *they shall be filled with the love of God*, and a sense of the efficacy of the atonement of Jesus, *as bowls with the blood of the sacrifice*, and *as the corners of the altar* on which it was sprinkled, as our consciences are with the blood of Christ, sealing our pardon and peace. *And the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people*, either the ministers above spoken of, whom the Lord sends to fight his battles, or rather those who are subdued by the sword of the Spirit, and now numbered with such as bear Christ's easy yoke, and share in the blessings of his people; whom like a shepherd he feeds, watches over, and protects from every evil; *for they shall be as the stones of a crown*, so precious in God's sight; *lifted up as an ensign upon his land*, trophies of the victories of Jesus, and, if perseveringly cleaving to him, monuments of his grace for ever and ever.

Some

3 ¶ Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats: for the LORD of Hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle.

4 Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle-bow, out of him every oppressor together.

5 And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, be-

cause the LORD is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded.

6 And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them; for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off: for I am the LORD their God, and will hear them.

7 And they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine: yea, their children shall see

Some refer these promises to Israel after the flesh, when under the Maccabees they were victorious over Antiochus and their other foes; but the sense given seems far preferable, and affords a nobler view of the prophecy.

4. Genuine believers shall be filled with wonder, love, and praise. *For how great is his goodness*, in thus loving us, living, dying for us, and bestowing upon us the riches of his grace and the abundance of his blessings; *and how great is his beauty!* In every true believer's eye he is beyond compare; *the chiefest of ten thousand, and altogether lovely: corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids;* true believers in Christ Jesus shall be vigorous, active, lively; going forth as refreshed with corn and wine, singing in the good ways of God, and fruitful, as it is by some translated, in every good word and work.

CHAP. X.

THIS chapter is a continuation of the prophecy begun in the preceding one, and goes on with a representation of the future prosperities of Judah and Israel in consequence of the recovery of God's favour; their military strength and victories; their complete and safe return into their own land, and their flourishing re-establishment in it.

Ver. 1. Ask ye of the Lord, &c.] They asked of the Lord, &c. so the Lord gave them thunders and large showers, and every one had a green and flourishing field. This verse certainly ought not to have been separated from the foregoing, as it accounts for the joyous and plentiful harvests there spoken of, by attributing them to the seasonable showers vouchsafed by God in regard of the people having addressed their supplications to him; as, on the contrary, in the two next verses, their past misfortunes are expressly ascribed to their having had recourse to idols, which could not hear nor help them.

Ver. 3. The goats] This should be rendered *the he-goats*, the chiefs and leaders of the flock, metaphorically put for the principal persons in a state. See Jer. l. 8, &c.

Against the shepherds] Or, the wicked priests, who purchased the priesthood for money. The next clause may be rendered, *And I executed judgment upon the leaders; but the Lord of Hosts hath looked upon,* &c. See Isai. xiv. 9.

As his goodly horse in the battle] See Job's fine description of the war-horse, ch. xxxix. 19—25. whose courage and strength are there displayed as setting forth the glorious perfections of his Maker. Such, it is said, God

would make the house of Judah to be, furnished with every requisite for obtaining military success.

Ver. 4. Out of him] Out of it: that is, out of the house of Judah.

The corner] Or, chief. A community is often represented as an edifice or building; and the corresponding parts expressed by the same name. Hence as the largest stones or timbers are used in the angles to bind together and strengthen the sides of the building, which meet therein as in a common centre; so the angle or corner metaphorically denotes the chief personage in a community, on whom its strength and security principally depends.

The nail] *נַיִן* *isethed*, is properly a nail or pin used to fasten the timbers or parts of a building together; and may therefore serve to denote the officers next in command under the chief, by whose means the common soldiers are united, kept steady, and in regular order. Bishop Lowth has two excellent notes on Isai. xxii. 23, 24. in which are stated the use and importance of *nails, spikes, or wooden pins*, and their application to denote persons eminent in station and power. Such a nail or pin was Eliakim to be, the support of his family and friends; and such had Shebna been; but he, it is said, ver. 25. was to be removed, cut down, and to fall, so as to involve in his ruin all that depended on him. In one of these notes the Bishop cites Ezra, ix. 8. "Grace hath been shewed from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place." That is, says the Bishop, as the margin of our English Bible explains it, "a constant and sure abode." But might it not rather mean, "a person of wisdom and authority to conduct and steady them, and on whom they might lean for support, after that God had brought them once more to his holy place?"

The battle-bow] This, I think, can only mean the archers in an army.

Every oppressor together] This should be rendered *all that draw near together*. In the house or building, these words would denote the stones of common use placed contiguous or in close order one by another. Correspondently in the army must be meant the close embodied phalanx, or main body of men of war advancing on together in regular order to meet the enemy.

Ver. 5. Which tread down, &c.] Treading down the mire of the streets in battle, when they fight; because, &c.

it, and be glad; their heart shall rejoice in the LORD.

8 I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them: and they shall increase as they have increased.

9 And I will sow them among the people: and they shall remember me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and turn again.

10 I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of

Gilead and Lebanon; and *place shall not be found for them.*

11 And he shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up: and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away.

12 And I will strengthen them in the LORD, and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the LORD.

The riders on horses] The people of Gog and Magog are said to be riders on horses, Ezek. xxxviii. 15. See ch. xii. 4.

Ver. 8. I will hiss for them] I will whistle for them, or give them the signal.

Ver. 9. And I will sow them, &c.] When or though I have dispersed them among the nations, yet shall they remember me in far countries; and their children shall live and shall return. Houbigant. All this pertains to the last restoration of the Jews, which is adumbrated by the return of the Israelites from Egypt into Canaan. See Isai. xi. 11. Certain it is, says Bishop Chandler, that Israel's coming out of Egypt is often mentioned by the prophets, and always as the highest instance of God's interposition for their preservation. They also foretel other future deliverances, like that of Egypt, *with a mighty hand and a stretched out arm, in the words of returning out of Egypt*, because that was known to be a pattern of all miraculous escapes, for weighty ends of divine Providence. *I will bring them again out of the land of Egypt*, saith God; which could not be meant of the remnant after Nebuchadnezzar's desolation, that fled into Egypt, who were all to perish there, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah; but of the whole body of the Jews, who were to return from a captivity like that of Egypt, and in as wonderful a manner; and therefore Zechariah, keeping the figure of Egypt in view, speaks as if the Red Sea were to be again dried up for their passage: *And he [Israel] shall pass through the sea with affliction*; or, as the LXX read, *the neck or strait of the Red Sea, &c.* The expression occurs in Ps. lxxviii. 22. and in this proverbial sense St. Matthew seems to use the words, ch. ii. 15. *Out of Egypt have I called my Son.* See Chandler's Defence, p. 217.

Ver. 10. And place shall not be found for them] And it shall not suffice them. Houbigant.

Ver. 11. And he shall pass, &c.] Some render these words, *And when they shall be in straits or under difficulties, in passing over the sea, or river [Euphrates]; then they shall smite the waves in Euphrates, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up.*

REFLECTIONS.—Ist, God is now returning in mercy to Israel; and therefore,

1. They are directed to apply to him for the rain in its

season, on which the fruitfulness of their land depended. In Judæa the rain fell periodically; the former rain in autumn, about seed-time, the latter in March, April, and May; from which time to September they had scarcely any; and if these failed, the harvest necessarily suffered. Now God promises to hear their prayers, to send his clouds, and by watering their lands seasonably, to give them plenty of the fruits of the earth. The common blessings of Providence are to be humbly sought, nor looked upon as things of course, but as rich gifts of grace; and this may be referred mystically to the influences of God's Spirit, by which alone our souls can be quickened to bring forth fruit unto God; and therefore we must ask this holy spirit from God in ceaseless and importunate prayer.

2. None of the idols of the heathen, or those which their fathers worshipped, could give rain; their false prophets and diviners, who pretended to consult them, and return answers from them as oracular, were liars; they told false dreams, and comforted in vain; following these wicked shepherds, they had gone astray as a flock; and for this their shepherds, who had deluded them, were cut off in anger and none left; and the goats, the princes and priests, who, instead of going before the flock aright, misled and misused them, God had punished severely. By these examples they should therefore be warned, and cease from idolatry, worshipping and serving God alone. Especially,

3. Seeing that God had now done such great things for them, *visiting them with his favour as his flock recovered from their dispersion and captivity; and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle*, beautiful, strong, and formidable. *Out of him went forth the corner*, he laid the foundation of their restoration; *out of him the nail*, which fastened them together; *out of him the battle-bow*, all their military power was derived from him; *out of him every oppressor, or exactor*; either those enemies who had oppressed them did it by his permission; or the word may be taken in a correspondence with the rest, that all the might they had, or should be endued with, to make any of the neighbouring nations tributary to them, must be from his gift alone. See the critical notes. In my Reflections, I take the words in their common sense.

Some apply this to the Messiah, the corner-stone, the nail

CHAP. XI.

The destruction of Jerusalem. The faithful being cared for, the impenitent are rejected. The staves of Beauty and Bands broken by the rejection of Christ. The type and curse of a foolish shepherd.

[Before Christ 517.]

OPEN thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars.

nail fastened in a sure place, the battle-bow to subdue all the enemies of his believing people.

2dly, The promises contained in the latter part of this chapter certainly look farther than the establishment of Israel after their first captivity; and appertain to the Gospel-church in general, or rather have special reference to the Jewish people in the last days, when they shall be turned to the Lord.

1. Consider them as applicable to the Israel of God in general. *Because the Lord is with them*, with the preachers of his Gospel, and the faithful in Christ Jesus; they shall be as *mighty men*, strengthened by grace to fight the Lord's battles against all their enemies, within and without, and the strongest shall fall before them. If they cleave by faith perseveringly to Jesus, they shall be *saved* through the mercy of God, and live safely and comfortably in the church of Christ below, being rescued from the bondage of corruption. They shall be branches of the true olive, and God will be their covenant God, ready to *hear* and answer all their prayers. He will fill them with spiritual joy, as men rejoice through new wine; and their blessings shall descend to children's children, who shall behold their fathers' mercies. The Gospel of Christ, as the shepherd's whistle, shall gather the faithful who yield to be saved by grace, out of all lands, from the captivity of sin, much more burdensome than that of Egypt or Assyria; for Jesus shall redeem those who fly to him for salvation from every enemy, through the virtue of his precious blood; and great shall be their multitude, far exceeding that of Israel, when increased as the sand of the sea-shore, see Hof. i. 10. *God will sow them among the people*, as his precious seed in all lands, and the most distant countries shall remember him, and, turning to the Lord and perseveringly giving him their hearts, shall live with their children the life of grace and glory. They shall possess the good land where all spiritual blessings abound, and place shall scarcely be found for the multitude of converts, and not one of them shall be left, *righteousness shall cover the earth as the waters the sea*. He will open a way for the faithful through all their difficulties, and cause their strongest and most inveterate foes to fall before them. In the Lord is their strength, therefore they must prevail, and they shall walk up and down in his name, going forth in his might, and making mention of his righteousness only, walking with God by faith, and holding that divine communion with him, which the world knows nothing of.

2. These promises may also be particularly applied to Israel, when they shall be recovered in the latter days from their present dispersion; when they will receive the true Messiah as their only Saviour, who will convert their

2 Howl, fir-tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down.

3 *There is* a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled: a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled.

hearts to himself, increasing them more than ever; will strengthen them against all their enemies, and probably make them his chief instruments in the ruin of the anti-christian foe; after whose fall, it is supposed by many of the best interpreters, they will dwell long and happily in their own land of Judæa; and, being now become the people of Jesus, shall glory in his name as much as they have before blasphemed it.

CHAP. XI.

THIS chapter contains a prophecy of a very different cast from the foregoing. The people would not always behave as they ought, and therefore would not always be prosperous. Before their final glorious restoration, an event of a most calamitous nature was doomed to take place, the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem, which is plainly here foretold, and ascribed to its proper cause, punishment for notorious wickedness. The flock, meaning God's people, were under the guidance of corrupt and unprincipled pastors, who sacrificed them to their own lucrative and ambitious views. The Messiah, then, is represented as assuming for a while the direction of them, as the good shepherd. After this, the prophet is held forth as the type of a worthless shepherd, or a succession of evil governors, who, heedless of the flock, or seeking only to oppress it, at once ruin the flock and bring destruction on themselves.

Ver. 1. Open thy doors, &c.] This manner of expression sufficiently shews, that Lebanon itself is not addressed, which had no doors, or gates; but the temple, built of the cedars of Lebanon. In the three preceding chapters, Zechariah spoke of the advantages and prosperities of Judah and Jerusalem, after the return from Babylon, both before and after the times of the Maccabees. Here he predicts the ruin of the temple, the rejection of the Jews, and their subjection to the Romans. He foretels at the same time a remarkable circumstance, in the passion of our Saviour, and marks out clearly the little flock of the church, and the care which the great Shepherd takes of it. See Calmet.

Ver. 2. Howl, fir-tree] O fir-tree; because the cedar is fallen, because, &c. Howl, O ye oaks of Bashan, because the defenced forest is overthrown. Houbigant. When any apologue or fable became celebrated for the art and beauty of its composition, or for some extraordinary efficacy in its application, it was soon converted and worn into a proverb. We have a fine instance of this in the message of Jehovah to Amaziah, 2 Kings, xiv. 9, 10. where we see plainly that Jotham's satiric apologue of the thistle and cedar was then become a proverb. Of the like kind is this of the prophet,

4 ¶ Thus saith the LORD my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter;

5 Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the LORD; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not.

6 For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's

hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them.

7 And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock.

8 Three shepherds also I cut off in one

prophet, Howl, O fir-tree, &c. to denote the danger of the lower people, when their superiors cannot withstand the tempest. See Div. Leg. b. iv. sect. 4.

Ver. 3. *For the pride of Jordan is spoiled*] Because the waters of Jordan have overflowed, so that the lions can no more rest among its reeds, and on its banks; that is, no place in Judæa is safe whither the warriors and great men may betake themselves. Houbigant. Dr. Blayney observes, that by "the pride of Jordan," those woods and thickets are primarily intended, which rise proudly above the banks of that river, and greatly decorate the scene. But here, in a secondary and metaphorical sense, they are put for the residences of those princes and grandees, who too often like lions devour and oppress the people under them. In Jer. xii. 5. those thickets, the haunt of lions and wild beasts, consequently places of great alarm and danger, are aptly opposed to a land of peace and security.

Ver. 4. *Feed the flock of the slaughter*] Or the flock prepared for slaughter. That flock is so described in the next verse, as to make it evident that a flock not of sheep, but of men, is meant, and consequently an allegorical shepherd. Zechariah was not only of a priestly family, but one of the chief priests; supposing him to be, as it is most likely he was, the person mentioned Neh. xii. 16. It belonged therefore to his station and office to take upon himself the guidance and instruction of the people. For, as his contemporary Malachi observes, ch. ii. 7. *The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth.* Compare Deut. xxx. 10. xxxiii. 10. Jer. xviii. 18, &c. The people are denominated *the flock of slaughter*, because they were devoted to ruin by following the mischievous counsels of their false teachers.

Ver. 5. *And hold themselves not guilty*] And repent not, or are not ashamed. See Jer. ii. 3. l. 7. Hof. v. 15. The Romans are here referred to, who, at the time of the coming of the great Shepherd of the sheep, the Messiah, had reduced the Jews under their power, whom they bought and sold as they pleased. By their own shepherds are meant the chief priests and rulers of the Jews, who shed, without remorse, the blood of their flock in their civil contests.

Blessed be the Lord; for I am rich] That is, they hypocritically and impiously pretend to return God thanks for having put it in their power to acquire riches by such ungodly means.

Ver. 6. *For I will no more pity, &c.*] It is a remark which deserves attention, that the prophets representing two persons, the Word, or the Messiah, and them-

selves, in the very same discourses, will sometimes speak of themselves, and at other times in the character that they are commanded to assume; of this numberless instances might be given: from the beginning of this verse, till the prophet takes his staff, he represents, and speaks in the person of, the Messiah, whose conduct is here figuratively described. *Into his neighbour's hand*, refers to the civil wars, and *his king* to the Roman emperor. These things happened together in the last siege of Jerusalem, when the Jews mutually destroyed and murdered each other, while the Romans besieged their city. See Sharpe's Second Argument, p. 351. and Houbigant.

Ver. 7. *And I will feed, &c.*] In Ezek. xxxvii. 16, 17. the prophet writes the names of the tribes upon two sticks, which, joined together, aptly express the union of all the tribes. But here the prophet takes the shepherd's crook, or staff, to shew the office and power of the Messiah; the Logos, or Word; for, to feed is to govern. In one hand he holds the staff, which he calls *Beauty*, to express the delight which the Lord has in governing his people, while they do what is pleasing in his sight, and strictly observe their part of the covenant subsisting between him and them. The other staff is properly called *Binders*, to express the union of Israel and Judah. See Dr. Sharpe as above. Bishop Chandler observes, that the prophets frequently employ metaphorical words, with intent, not to signify the thing which is obvious in the first sense of the words, but what is to be collected from another etymology or derivation thereof. Sometimes a double reference to different persons is included in the same word; again, the letters of a word are transposed to form a word that has no affinity in etymology or sense with the former. Thus our prophet calls one of his shepherd's staves נְעוּם *noam*, or *delight*, to signify the pleasure which God had in his people, and the delight which the people took in God's worship. He calls his other staff חֲבֵלִים *chobelim*, *bands*, in token that the people were become *chobelim*, *corrupters of God's law*,—and their souls did mutually בָּחֻלָּה *bachalah*, *abhor* each other. See his *Defence*, p. 226.

Two staves] A staff, or crook, is the proper ensign of a shepherd. The shepherds of old time had two rods or staves: one turned round at the top, that it might not hurt the sheep; this was for counting them, and separating the sound from the diseased (see Lev. xxvii. 32.); the other had an iron hook at the end of it, to pull in the stray sheep, and hold them fast while the shepherd corrected them. The Psalmist mentions both these, Psal. xxxiii. 4. *Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.* See Lowth.

Ver. 8. *Three shepherds also—in one month*] The great Shepherd,

month; and my soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me.

9 Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another.

10 And I took my staff, *even* Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people.

Shepherd, the Messiah, goes on to speak, agreeably to the ancient custom, of hiring shepherds for a month. The priests were frequently changed among the Jews during the latter part of their polity or commonwealth; whence the priesthood became venal, or was disposed of at the will of the Romans; and to such priests the latter part of the verse is justly applicable.

Ver. 9, 10. *Then said I, &c.*] These are the words of the Messiah to the priests of his time, whom he quickly forsook, and broke his staff of *loveliness* or *delight*, being no longer inclined to spare them, nor to restrain the people from oppressing the Jewish nation, as he had before restrained them by that covenant which he had made with the neighbouring nations. That decree of God, by which he had hindered the nations from oppressing and destroying the little commonwealth of the Jews, is here called *God's covenant*. See Houbigant. We may render *that that dieth*, ver. 9. *that which is dying*.

Ver. 11. *And it was broken, &c.*] *But when this was broken in that day, the poor or meek of the flock, as also those who watched with me, knew that this was the word of the Lord.* The prophet calls those who followed the true Shepherd, *the poor, or meek of the flock*; but *those who watched*, priests and teachers of the law, whose business it was to watch over their religion: each of these, not long after the ascension of Christ, *knew that this was the word of the Lord*, that the *staff* was broken wherewith God had hitherto fed his people, and that the ruin both of the Jewish religion and polity was at hand. Houbigant.

Ver. 12, 13. *And I said, &c.*] *Afterwards I said unto them, if this pleaseth you, give me my hire; if not, forbear: so, &c.* ver. 13. *And the Lord said unto me, cast it to the potter, [namely,] this very goodly valuation which they made of me.* The Messiah speaks this to the chief-priests and rulers of the Jews, from whom he demands his *hire*, or, faith in his Gospel; for no other hire can be here understood. We have seen above, that Zechariah fed not the flock, and that the person of the Messiah is here exhibited, to whom alone it appertains to hold the staff of *delight*, and gentleness, and to make a covenant with the nations, that they should not destroy the Jewish people. There the Messiah only speaks, who expected no other hire or reward from the Jews than faith with all its blessed consequences. שְׂכָרִי *sekari*, in the last clause, is more properly rendered *price* than *hire*, because the prophet prophesies ambiguously, and introduces the Messiah complaining to the following purpose: "I demanded my hire or reward from them: but they, so far from thinking to reward me, even weighed out the price or purchase-money for my life." So St. Matthew un-

11 And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it *was* the word of the LORD.

12 And I said unto them, If ye think good, give *me* my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty *pieces* of silver.

13 And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was

derstood the place, who by his quotation teaches us; first, that שְׂכָרִי *sekari*, here is not to be understood, as in the former part of the verse, for the *reward* or *hire* of a shepherd, but for the very *price* of the shepherd's *life* given to the traitor Judas: *Secondly*, that these words, *A good price at which I was valued*, in like manner denote the valuation, not of the shepherd's *labour*, but of his *person* [at which I was valued]; which estimation he calls *goodly*, in scorn, because it was a shameful thing for the murderers of the shepherd, however wicked, to purchase the facility of murdering him at so low a rate. The latter words could have no ambiguity in them: for as nobody had seen Zechariah feed a flock, or demand his hire from any one, they could not doubt but that the prophet, when he said, *I took and cast the thirty pieces of silver, &c.* foretold that it should hereafter happen that *thirty pieces of silver, &c.* should be cast into the temple to or *for the potter*; though the other circumstances of this enigmatical prophecy could scarcely be explained or understood before the event itself. Such is Houbigant's explanation of this passage. Dr. Sharpe observes upon it, that after the dissolution of the covenant, mentioned ver. 10, 11. between the Lord and the Jews, in consequence of their pride and other corruptions, they were delivered up to their enemies; notwithstanding the glorious promises made them on their return, and which they had forfeited by breaking the covenant first on their part. On this occasion, the fate even of the shepherd himself is related, as it happened not long after the time of these troubles, which extended to the reign of Herod. *And I said unto them:—*The prophet said unto *them*, the rulers of the people,—relating here what really happened, when one of the disciples of Jesus demanded the price of the Lord:—*So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver; and the Lord said, &c.* ver. 13. It is the Messiah, the governor, the good Shepherd, whom the Jews had rejected, and not the prophet Zechariah, who, as one dismissed, demands the lowest price given to shepherds. This has manifestly a reference to what happened when the Messiah appeared in the flesh, and was again rejected by the Jews. The only difference in this account given by Zechariah is, that the prophet exhibits what was done by a third person, without introducing him into the relation. But this difference is such, as will not hinder a judicious and impartial man from believing the prophet, or the *Word*, to have had the future treatment of the same shepherd in view. And hence I take leave to remark, that it is a necessary key to the interpretation of the scriptures of the new covenant, that many things applied to our Lord in those writings are his *own* words, delivered under the character of *the LORD*, the

Logos

piized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.

14 Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

Logos or Word; and therefore not to be considered merely as ACCOMMODATIONS of phrases taken from the old scriptures, and applied to different purposes and persons in the new. See Dr. Sharpe's Second Argument, and Matt. xxvii.

The potter] It is not likely that the potter was at work within the sacred precincts of the temple, as has been conjectured; because the potter's field, the place where his business was carried on, was, as we are told, Matt. xxvii. 7. afterwards bought to bury strangers in. But who can suppose that the Jews would have suffered such a defilement of the holy place? It must therefore have been a field adjacent to, but without the walls, which, the potters having by digging out the earth for their manufacture rendered it useless for any other purpose, was bought for a trifling sum, and appropriated as before mentioned.

Ver. 14. Then I cut asunder, &c.] From the time that the people returned from Babylon, the Jews and Israelites had formed one society both of religion and polity, which society continued till the last destruction of Jerusalem, when, the Jewish kingdom being subverted, *the bands were broken*, and a disunion in religion was made; some of the Jews continuing attached to their ancient law as much as they could without the temple, and others professing the Christian faith. See Houbigant. *Israel*, says Calmet, denotes the unbelieving Jews, who rejected our Saviour; and *Judub*, the faithful ones who believed in him.

Ver. 15. Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd] The prophet follows the order of time, that he may foretel the madness and blindness of the shepherds, or of the priests and rulers of the Jewish nation, till the last destruction of Jerusalem; who not only disregarded religion, and the safety of the sheep, but even devoured such of them as were worth devouring; *shepherds of nothing*; ver. 17. for so *idol-shepherds* should be trampled;—retaining nothing of the shepherd but the name. The arm of the Jews was *dried up* from that time when they were no longer able to bear arms, or to defend themselves; as their *right eye is darkened* to the true knowledge of the Scriptures, which they read as with a veil before them.

Ver. 16. For, lo,—which shall not visit, &c.] *For lo,—who will not look after those that are perishing, nor seek the wandering one, nor heal the broken, nor carry the rattle or the weaver; but will eat the flesh of the fat one, and pluck off their hoofs.* The unwise and wicked shepherd, instead of being tender and gentle with his flock, is supposed to drag them about with his iron crook, or to overdrive them in rough and stony ground, so as to break their hoofs.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The destruction of the Jewish temple and nation is here foretold.

1. They are devoted to ruin. *Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars;* which may be understood

15 ¶ And the LORD said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd.

16 For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land *which* shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that

of the temple; in building which, much cedar of Lebanon was employed; or of the gates of Jerusalem, both of them being forced open, and burnt by the Roman soldiers. The *fir-tree* and the *cedar*, the mighty men of war, the princes and rulers, are doomed to fall, and given up to the spoil; and this, being determined of God, is spoken of as already done. The *oaks of Basban*, the mightiest, are now hewn down; and the *forest of the vintage*, or the *fortified forest*, Jerusalem, strong and filled with inhabitants, is destroyed; *their glory is spoiled*, their treasures plundered; *the pride of Jordan is spoiled*, the whole land of Judæa wasted; at which the lions, who infested the banks of this river, roar; the emblems of the princes and judges who oppressed and harassed the poor people.

2. This will make a howling among *the shepherds*, the great men of the nation, who will with bitterest grief behold these desolations, and be themselves terribly involved in them. They who roared over their prey, and were the terrors of others, have now in just judgment these terrors turned upon themselves. *Note*; In a day of recompence, wicked and careless shepherds, whether ministers or civil rulers, will meet the heaviest doom.

2dly, The people of the Jews are called *the flock of the slaughter*, as being so severely treated by their shepherds, or as devoted to the sword. The prophet, as the type or representative of Christ, is commanded to feed them, ministering his Gospel to them, that the penitent poor among them might be fed with the word of God, whilst others ripened for destruction. We have,

1. An account of their miserable condition. *Their possessors*, who, as good shepherds, civil or religious, should have taken all care of them, *slay them*; their priests, scribes, and Pharisees, by false doctrines destroyed their souls; and *hold themselves not guilty*, blinded by pride in their errors; and *they that sell them say, Blessed be the Lord, for I am rich*, making long prayers, though laden with the spoils of widows' houses, and valuing themselves on their external piety and goodness, when their burnt-offerings were robbery, and their hearts abominable; shewing no pity towards the souls of the people. And sad is that church's case, where such careless, selfish, covetous pastors rule.

2. For this, God gives them up to destruction. *I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land*, who were involved in the general guilt, and doomed to sink in one promiscuous ruin: their own intestine divisions will pave the way, and the Roman emperor, the king whom they chose, John, xix. 15. shall complete their desolations.

3. Before their judgment comes, Christ undertakes to *feed the flock of slaughter, the poor of the flock*, the faithful among them, chiefly poor people, who were made partakers of the Saviour's grace, and all the blessings of his Gospel; while the rulers and great men in general rejected the counsel of the Lord against their own souls, and thereby

filled

that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces.

17 Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth

the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.

filled up the measure of their iniquities. To execute his pastoral office, the great Shepherd takes two staves, the one he calls *Beauty*, the other *Bands*; concerning the meaning of which there is great diversity of opinions. But see the critical notes. *Three shepherds also he cut off in one month*; which may refer to the punishment of the wicked shepherds in general; or to the princes, priests, and prophets; or the three sects of Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians; or perhaps it may relate to some singular judgment on three notorious offenders, of whom we have no record remaining.

4. For their obstinacy and impenitence the Jews in general are rejected. *My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me*; they could not bear his high pretensions as the Messiah, nor endure his sharp rebukes: and while the sinner persists in his enmity against God, he must be an abomination in his sight. *Then said I, I will not feed you; will take no more care of them, nor continue his Gospel any longer among them: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is cut off, let it be cut off*: he devotes them to the ruin which they have provoked, and consigns them over to the pestilence and the sword: *and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another*, through the severity of famine, or the rancour of their mutual animosities. And in token of this utter rejection of them, *I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder*, to signify the ceasing of his pastoral office, and his abandoning them to destruction, the peculiar national covenant being henceforth broken and abolished; *and it was broken in that day, when Christ rejected them*, (see Matt. xxi. 43.) or when he died; and this was evident when shortly after Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed: *and the poor of the flock that waited upon me*, the disciples of Christ, who attended his ministry, and were generally of the poorer sort, the kingdom of God being chiefly composed of such, *knew that it was the word of the Lord*, it being mixed with faith in their hearts, and they fully satisfied that every tittle would come to pass as Jesus had spoken.

5. We have a particular instance of their contempt of Christ. *I said unto them, Give me my price; and if not, forbear; discharge me, if you like not my service; or if you think me worth nothing, pay me nothing. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver*, the price of a servant, Exod. xxi. 32. a goodly price, saith he ironically, *that I was prized at of them*: with disdain, therefore, he casts it to the potter, in the house of the Lord. To what this refers we cannot be at a loss to discover; (see Matt. xxvii. 9, 10.) this being the price for which Judas sold his matter; and with this sum, which in remorse the traitor had cast down in the temple, the chief priests bought the potter's field, a waste ground where clay had been dug, to bury strangers in.

6. Their whole civil state and polity are hereupon dis-

solved. *Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel*, a spirit of dissension being sowed among them, which hastened their destruction; and when destroyed by the Romans, they were separated and dispersed as captives into all lands. Thus, when ungodliness abounds, the bonds of civil society are loosed, and such a wicked people hasten their own dissolution.

3dly, Having rejected the good Shepherd Christ Jesus, the Jewish people are given up to wicked and foolish shepherds, whom the prophet is here commanded to personate, such as were the scribes and Pharisees, who deceived and deluded the people with false expositions and vain hopes, preying upon them instead of feeding them; and, far from seeking to save that which was lost, or healing the wounded, they neglected their charge, or made their proselytes sevenfold more the children of hell than they were before; for which, heavy curses are denounced upon them: and the character and woes belong to others besides them, who in the Christian church, pretending to feed the flock of the Lord, in reality betray and destroy them. We may read,

1. The character of every foolish idol shepherd. (1.) *He leaveth the flock*: he neglects the duty of his ministry, resides not among the people committed to his care, and for some poor pittance gets a hireling to supply his place. (2.) *He doth not visit those that be cut off*, takes no pains to recover lost souls, nor ever goes round his parish or district to admonish and exhort the people. (3.) *He doth not seek the young ones*, by catechising and early instruction desiring to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. (4.) *He doth not heal that that is broken*, but, if a poor sinner applies to him under conviction of sin, with a bleeding heart, he is a physician of no value; he knows not what advice to give, and wickedly and ignorantly heals the hurt slightly, crying peace, peace, where there is no peace; thus making the evil worse. (5.) *He doth not feed that that standeth still*, and through weakness and hunger is ready to faint; the famished flock look up and are not fed; the husks of dry morality, or the hemlock of false doctrines, such as man's natural dignity, justification by works, and self-sufficient endeavours, are laid before them to their ruin. (6.) *He eats the flesh of the fat, and tears their claws in pieces*: though he hates the work of the ministry, yet he is rapacious in exacting the wages of it; and in luxury and ease devours the flesh as well as the fleece of the poor flock.

2. The curse is sure and heavy upon him. *His arm shall be dried up, and his right eye darkened*; judicial blindness shall seal him up under wrath; his power to oppress the flock shall be destroyed, and the sword of wrath overtake him. *Woe therefore to the idol shepherd!*

C H A P. XII.

Jerusalem a cup of trembling to herself, and a burdensome stone to her adversaries. The victorious restoring of Judah. The repentance of Jerusalem.

[Before Christ 517.]

THE burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.

2 Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah *and* against Jerusalem.

C H A P. XII.

IT is not difficult to perceive, that the prophecies in this and the two following chapters relate to future times, and most probably to those predicted of by Ezekiel in the 38th and 39th chapters; where it is said, that Israel after their restoration and return to their own country would be assailed by a combination of many nations. Such an invasion is also here foretold; but it is not to be expected, that all the particulars of a distant prophecy should be clearly understood before the time of its accomplishment. It is at least likely, that when the time shall come for the re-establishment of the Jews (of which sufficient intimation is given in the prophecies both of the Old and New Testament), and they shall begin to collect themselves, and attempt a settlement in their ancient possessions, such a measure would create jealousy and uneasiness in those powers more especially, who are interested in the dominion over those countries. The Turks, we know, are at present, and long have been, in possession of the country of Palestine; and in the opinion of many, who have brought specious arguments to justify it, particularly of the learned Jos. Mede, (p. 674. and 816.) their prince is intended by Gog, prince of Meshech and Tubal, Ezek. xxxviii. 2, &c. and by the king of the north, Dan. xi. 40, &c. concerning whom the like things are prophesied in those chapters respectively. Now should that power subsist at the time, it may fairly be presumed, that he, and any other power in the like circumstances, would oppose, with all their might, an attempt to set up an independent sovereignty in those parts. But without pretending to determine precisely concerning the invaders, the substance of the prophecy in this, and on to the seventh verse of the next chapter, will be found to amount to this: that Jerusalem will be besieged by a multitude of hostile nations, to the great terror of the people in its vicinity, as well as of Judah itself; but that the attempts of those nations will be frustrated through the special interposition of God, and will terminate in their total discomfiture and ruin, and in the permanent peace and prosperity of the victorious Jews. After which the Jews will be brought at length to see and lament the sin of their forefathers in putting their Messiah to death; will be admitted as members of the gospel-dispensation; and

3 And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.

4 In that day, saith the LORD, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness.

5 And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the LORD of Hosts their God.

through the great atonement of the Messiah, and the grace of his Spirit, shall be cleansed from past guilt, will renounce all their former offensive practices, and carefully abstain from a future repetition of them.

Ver. 1. The burden] *כֶּבֶד* *massa*, usually denotes a prophecy of a calamitous kind. But it does not always so; for sometimes it signifies simply a *prophecy*, or revelation of some matter of importance, as Prov. xxx. 1. Here however it may be fairly taken in the first sense, and rendered a *burden*; for though the issue be favourable to Israel in the end, yet it is preceded at first by a cup of trembling; and to the enemies of Israel the whole is from beginning to end sufficiently onerous.

Ver. 2. A cup of trembling] That is, I will cause it to produce the same effect on the neighbouring nations as a cup of intoxicating liquors, which causes trembling, astonishment, and terror. See Bishop Lowth's note on Isai. li. 21.

Ver. 3. A burdensome stone, &c.] *A stone of burden to all people: all that heave it, shall be crushed in pieces, &c.* It was the custom among the inhabitants of Palestine, even in St. Jerom's days, to place round stones of prodigious weight in their towns, villages, and castles, wherewith the youth used to exercise themselves, according to their different strength; some raising them as high as their knees, and others as high as their heads; which efforts frequently occasioned very dangerous accidents. It is to this custom that the prophet alludes here; and many think that it is one of this kind of stones which is mentioned 1 Kings, i. 9. and alluded to, Eccl'us, vi. 21.

All the people of the earth] It is obvious, that by *all* is meant only *many*; as it is expressed, Ezek. xxxviii. 6, 9, 15. "Thou and many people with thee."

Ver. 4. I will smite every horse, &c.] The cavalry, the elephants, the numerous armies of the enemy shall be put to flight, and defeated by a small number of foot, and those ill-armed. Instead of *people* we may read *nations*.

Ver. 5. The inhabitants of Jerusalem, &c.] *There is strength to me, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the Lord, &c.* Houbigant. This passage well expresses the sentiments of the men of Judah, concerning the interest they had in the safety of Jerusalem and its inhabitants, on which their own strength

6 ¶ In that day will I make the governors of Judah like a hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, *even* in Jerusalem.

7 The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify *themselves* against Judah.

8 In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them.

9 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

10 ¶ And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for *his* only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for *his* first-born.

11 In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.

12 And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart;

13 The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart;

14 All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.

strength and security depended in a great degree; so that they would of course be influenced to bring that assistance, the efficacy of which is set forth in the verse that follows.

Ver. 6. And Jerusalem shall be inhabited again, &c.] And Jerusalem shall again be safely inhabited in peace. Houbigant.

Ver. 7. That the glory of the house of David, &c.] This may be rendered, That the glorying of the house of David, and the glorying of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, may not exalt itself against Judah.

Ver. 8. And he that is feeble, &c.] And he who had fallen among them—shall be as David,—when he seemed to have fallen before Saul, and was compelled to hide himself in mountains and caves. The Jews are called the house of David, as the Messiah himself is called David. See Houbigant. Calmet says, it appears that the prophet would point out the birth of Christ by these words, The house of David shall be, &c. and would convince the Israelites that henceforward this ancient and illustrious house must derive its splendour and glory, not from its empire over the nation, but from its own virtue, and from its fidelity to the Lord. Indeed the house of David never did reascend the throne; but was well recompensed, notwithstanding, by the honour that it enjoyed of producing the blessed Jesus. Angel or messenger is, as we have before observed, one of the titles of the Messiah. The terms are varied in Micah, ii. 13. where it is said, The Breaker, or Redeemer (as it should be rendered), is gone before them: their king is past, even the Lord, &c. to signify by these synonymous expressions, that one and the same person is intended by them all; even the Messiah, as the Jews themselves say, who is the angel of the Lord. See Chandler's Defence, p. 63.

Ver. 10—14. And I will pour, &c.] The Jews had stumbled, and fell at the stone of stumbling and rock of offence, the Messiah in his humble appearance, as Isaiah foretold. But that no one might be surprised at this sudden change

of their affairs, Zechariah tells us, they should themselves be first changed, and repent heartily of that sin which had been the cause of their fall; for God should pour out on them the spirit of grace and supplication, that they might look with compunction of heart on him whom they had pierced; and he should by his Spirit improve those good dispositions, which his grace and the methods of his dealing with this people had begun in them, into a thorough conviction of his being the Messiah whom they had rejected; for this they would weep bitterly, ver. 11. and make earnest supplications, till received again into his grace and favour. This done, it follows, chap. xiii. 1. *In that day there shall be a fountain opened, &c.* Now who were they whose sin and uncleanness were washed away, but the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem? The same who had sinned, and mourned, and repented, and were therefore pardoned? What did they mourn for, but for him whom they had pierced, and whose death they bewailed with all the solemnities of true mourners? It was then the act and the sin of the house of David, and of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that they pierced and slew him whom they now looked upon; for which their land was treated as polluted, and not to be restored to them till their sin was remitted upon their true repentance. Thus much is evident from the context.

And who was he whom they pierced?—One of dignity, undoubtedly, whose murder was attended with grievous aggravations, since it affected the princes, the priests, the people, even all the tribes; one very dear to God, since his cause is God's, and God owns himself to have been pierced through his wounds, chap. xiii. 6, 7. One might challenge the unbelieving Jews or Gentiles to name any other besides the Christians' Messiah. The Jews looked for the fulfilment of this prophecy at their restoration from the present captivity. The later Jews own that it is a

C H A P. XIII.

The fountain of purgation for Jerusalem from idolatry, and false prophesy. The death of Christ, and the trial of a third part.

[Before Christ 517.]

IN that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inha-

prophecy of the murder of the Messiah, the son of Joseph, by the Gentile army, at their return from this captivity. It is therefore, according to them, a prophecy of the Messiah; for as there is no ground nor ancient tradition for a two-fold Messiah, it is plain that their old traditional sense, which they have thus corrupted, did apply it to that one Messiah. But that it cannot be interpreted of the Gentiles killing him, hence appears, that they were the same people that *killed him who mourned for him, and to whom a fountain was opened for him.* They sinned in killing him, for which God removed them out of their land, and would not resettle them therein, till they had repented of it. This puzzles the Jews exceedingly; they have been in their present dispersion sixteen or seventeen hundred years; their sins have not been greater in this dispersion than before and under the Babylonian captivity; nay they are less, by the sin of *idolatry*; yet then on a repentance superficial enough, after seventy years, God restored them to their land. Now, though they fast and mourn, and shew all the external tokens of an universal repentance, God will not be propitious. Does not God's inexorable nature shew clearly that some sin is still unrepented of?—What can it be, which is so big with evils, so extensive in its consequence?—They cannot say but Zechariah had informed them. It is the *piercing* unto death him whom God favoured, and this sin and punishment will not be removed, without an antecedent, general, and deep repentance.

Zechariah said nothing new to them in all this. David before described such sufferings of the Messiah under the figure of his own person, Psal. xxii. 16. Isaiah is more direct, and foretels of another, chap. liii. 5—8. And at last Daniel declares without ambiguity, chap. ix. 26. that *Messiah the prince should be cut off.* Can an unprejudiced mind deny after this, that Zechariah had the same intention which we see carried through all these prophets; or, that he spake not of their *piercing* the same person who is foretold in Daniel to be *Messiah the prince.* The light hereof shone so strongly upon a Jew of note in his nation, R. Moses Hadraman, that he applies this passage in Zechariah to Messiah, the son of David; and he had the authority of the ancients for it, by the confession of Kimchi. We may just observe farther, that the Hebrew word דקרן *dakarun*, rendered *pierced* in this verse signifies, “Piercing through, even to death.” See the next chapter, ver. 3. Isai. xiii. 15. And the subsequent verses of our prophet manifestly imply a real death. In consequence whereof they *shall mourn bitterly, as for an only son*, and that a first-born, as at the mourning which began for Josiah in Hadad-rimmon; most probably the place of the battle where Josiah was slain. There the lamentations for that good prince began, and

bitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.

2 ¶ And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of Hosts, *that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land.*

were thence continued for many days as far as Jerusalem, whither his body was carried to be interred in the sepulchre of his fathers; and there all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for him, and appointed the day to be annually observed with lamentations; so that thenceforward the mourning for Josiah became a proverb for an extraordinary lamentation; and as in other funeral mournings, so in this, the men and women in every house were to separate for many days, ver. 12, &c. in proportion to the dignity, rank, and worth of the deceased.

While these things are all joined together as they lie in the passage before us, the murder of an illustrious person of the Jewish nation, a general sin and punishment of the offenders, and as general a pardon and restoration upon a true sorrow for and sincere repentance of that sin,—it is impossible to find out any thing in history which answers to this prophecy besides the crucifixion of the Messiah. See Bishop Chandler's Defence, p. 88. Joseph. Antiq. book x. chap. 6. and John, xix. 37.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The promises contained in this chapter refer either to the church of God in general, or the Jewish people in particular, when in the last days God shall bring them into his fold. The prophecy is called a burden, because it is filled with terror to Israel's enemies; and it is prefaced with an awful description of him who undertakes to accomplish his own word. *He stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth; the Creator, Governor, and Upholder of all things, who formeth the spirit of man within him; the God of the spirits of all flesh, who has the sovereign dominion over them, and executes all his counsels for the good of his church, encouraging the hearts of his believing people, and injecting terrors into his enemies.* God promises,

1. To make the efforts of all the enemies of his church issue in their confusion. They who in these latter days persecute God's people, and lay siege against them, shall have a cup of trembling put into their hands. Be their foes never so many, never so mighty, spiritual or temporal, instead of prevailing against the church of God, they shall pull down ruin upon their own heads, as a burdensome stone, which crushes the man who attempts to lift it up. God's eyes of love and favour are upon his believing people; therefore their foes shall be smitten with blindness, astonishment, and madness, and baffled in all their enterprises; while the governors of the church, the ministers of Christ, by the gospel-word that they preach, like a devouring fire and a torch in a sheaf, shall bear down all before them; and none shall be able to resist the wisdom and spirit by which they speak.

They

3 And it shall come to pass, *that* when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his

mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in

They who apply this to the Jewish people, refer the prophecy either to the times of the Maccabees, or rather suppose it has respect to their future greatness; and that when they are returned to settle in their own land, the Mahometan powers will go up to besiege them, whose armies chiefly consist of cavalry, and shall fall on the mountains of Israel, defeated and destroyed by the Jewish forces.

2. God will establish his church and build it up great and glorious, defending every faithful member thereof with his arms of love and power. On him in those last and blessed days the governors of Judah shall place their confidence, he being the strength of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the bulwark of the country, and not any human supports, with which, as fortifications, they may be surrounded. The meanest, who dwell in tents, he will save; and none of the more distinguished and honourable members must arrogate to themselves any part in the salvation, and *magnify* themselves over their brethren, as if they owed to them their protection and support, when the whole is from God, and all alike debtors to unmerited grace, by which the weakest believer *shall be as David*, able to cope with their mightiest foes; *and the house of David*, the spiritual descendants of Jesus, David's son, a royal generation, they *shall be as God*, strong as the arm of omnipotence; *as the angel of the Lord before them*, all Christ's power being engaged for them, and they interested in it; he is their strength and their Redeemer.

Some understand this as literally to have its accomplishment, when Jerusalem shall be built on the very spot where it stood of old, and be again inhabited; *even in Jerusalem*: on which occasion the eastern antichristian powers shall assemble against it, and God will save them, both in the country and city, in some most distinguished manner; so that his arm shall be visible, and the glory be ascribed to him alone.

2dly, To apply these great things to the days of the Maccabees, seems to enervate the prophecy; a greater than they is surely here intended.

1. All the enemies of Christ's church and people shall be destroyed, as before was promised.

2. A spirit of grace, and supplications, and mourning, shall be poured forth upon all the people of God.

[1.] *A spirit of grace*; the Spirit of God shall be given to them, as a quickening, illuminating, converting sanctifying, comforting Spirit, the author of every divine and gracious temper in them, and witnessing to his own blessed work in the hearts of believers.

[2.] *A spirit of supplications*; for every gracious soul is immediately brought to his knees, and lives in an habitual course of waiting upon God; his soul can no more live without prayer than his body without breath: he is stirred up to the exercise of prayer, and assisted in the act by that Spirit of adoption which enables him to cry, *Abba, Father*, and helps his infirmities; and, in answer to his supplication, grace for grace is bestowed, by which means he increaseth with the increase of God.

[3.] *A spirit of mourning*. They shall look upon me

whom they have pierced, and mourn; see John, xix. 37. Their eye shall be directed in prayer to Christ, through whom alone the sinner has access to God; and the view of a crucified Jesus will melt their heart and make their eyes overflow. When we consider that he was wounded for our transgressions, that our sins were the nails, the spear which pierced the body of the Saviour, this will produce that godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of; which nothing but faith, as placed before the cross, beholding the evil of sin, can ever beget in us: and this mourning will be heart-felt and bitter, like that of a parent for his first-born son, or like the several mournings of Israel for Benjamin at the rock Rimmon, Judg. xx. 47. and for Josiah in the valley of Megiddon, where that pious king was slain, 2 Kings, xxiii. 29. And this will be the case with every individual believer, with every family, with every society of real Christians; the highest in rank, and the holiest by office, shall herein set the example; and all shall concur in lamenting their sin and wickedness, and looking to Jesus for pardon and peace.

They who refer this to the people of the Jews particularly, suppose that at their conversion, which will be general and sudden, this shall be fulfilled; when, the veil being taken from their hearts, they shall behold that Messiah whom they crucified, and, returning to him with weeping and supplication, shall testify their unfeigned remorse and sorrow for that black deed.

C H A P. XIII.

Ver. 1. A fountain opened—for sin and for uncleanness] The blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all sin, (1 John, i. 7.) is manifestly here intended, the Jews being, upon their repentance and conversion, to be admitted to all the privileges of the Christian covenant. The Hebrew words *חַטָּאת* *chattath* and *נִדְלָב* *niddlab*, which we translate *sin* and *uncleanness*, are legal terms; the former denotes *sin* generally, or any transgression of the law which required atonement, and is sometimes put for the means of purification from it, Numb. xix. 9. 17.; the latter is used for that *uncleanness*, or legal defilement, which secluded a man from all intercourse with holy things. Now whatever efficacy the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkled on the unclean, had to purify from legal sin and defilement, the same is ascribed to the blood of Christ in the Christian dispensation, for purging the conscience of a sinner from the guilt of dead works, or all moral pollution. Heb. ix. 13, 14.

Ver. 2. Idols] It has been urged, in proof that this prophecy was uttered before the Babylonish captivity, that idolatry and groundless pretensions to prophecy were common among the Jews at that time; which has not been the case since. But this argument proves nothing; for, supposing the Jews themselves to remain untainted with those corruptions, it surely will not be denied, that they do and may still prevail among other nations, who may be included in the term *הָאֲרָצִים* *haarets*, taken in its most general sense, *the earth*; and so I conceive it should be; for we are taught

the name of the LORD: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth.

4 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive:

5 But he shall say, I *am* no prophet, I *am* an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.

6 And *one* shall say unto him, What *are* these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, *Those* with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.

taught to expect that the conversion of the Jews will be followed by a farther reformation of the world, Rom. xi. 15. and that the time will come, when "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ;" Rev. xi. 15. and "the beast," the emblem of idolatry, "and with him the false prophet, shall be cast into a lake of fire and brimstone," Rev. xix. 20.

Ver. 3. *Thou speakest lies in the name of the Lord*] We may collect from these words, that those prophets only were to be exterminated who would be esteemed prophets of the true religion, as the most dangerous and abominable of any when they prophesied lies in the name of Jehovah, and under the pretext of being the servants of the true God. Zechariah here continues manifestly to refer to the times of the future restoration of the Jews.

Ver. 6. *These wounds*] Two ancient usages are clearly alluded to here; the one, that of the idolatrous priests and prophets, who sought to engage the attention and favour of their deity by cutting and slashing themselves, as the priests of Baal did, 1 Kings, xviii. 28.; the other, that of those who cut themselves as a token of their grief and mourning for their deceased relations and friends. It appears also from Jer. xlvi. 37. that these cuttings were performed on the hands in particular. When therefore the man, now ashamed of his pretensions to prophecy, came to be challenged for those scars which were visible on his hands, he would deny them to have proceeded from any idolatrous cause; but would have them thought to be marks left by those wounds which he gave himself in the house of his relations and friends, in the paroxysms of his grief for the loss of them.

Ver. 7—9. *Awake, O sword, &c.*] The prophet here begins a prophecy concerning the suffering of Christ, and the rising church of Christians. St. Matthew, chap. xxvi. 31. assures us, that these words were spoken of Christ. Instead of *finite*, Houbigant reads, *I will smite*, conformably to the last clause; but *I will turn*, or *bring back my hand upon the little ones*: that is, upon that third part of the people, which was to be tried as gold in the furnace. The third part of the people is that part who call on the name of the Lord, ver. 9. whence it is rightly collected, that the two

7 ¶ *Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of Hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.*

8 And it shall come to pass, *that* in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off *and* die; but the third shall be left therein.

9 And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, *It is* my people: and they shall say, *The LORD is* my God.

other parts of the Jewish nation which were to perish, were those Jews who received not the Gospel, and who were slain by the Romans: for it is said of the third part, *they shall call on my name*, in opposition to the two parts, ver. 8. But of that third, many Jews who had embraced the Gospel, apostatized: so that the number of Jews who continued in the faith of the Gospel was comparatively very small, as we learn from the Acts of the Apostles. See Houbigant. Dr. Sharpe observes upon these verses, that the *shepherd* called *the fellow of God*, was to be *smitten*; the *sheep* were to be *scattered*; two parts of all that inhabited the land were to be cut off and die; a third only would be left, which was to be brought through the fire, refined as silver, and tried as gold. Then it follows, ver. 9. *They shall call, &c.* The like events happened under the Gospel. The shepherd was smitten, the sheep were scattered; they were to endure several trials, and their faith was to be more precious than gold tried with fire. To the Jews our Saviour said, *Behold, your house is left unto you desolate; and, verily, I say unto you, ye shall not see me until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.* Our Saviour here foretels the desolation and destruction of Jerusalem; and instead of comforting the Jews, with the prospect of a third temple, and the restoration of bloody sacrifices in some future age or advent of the Messiah, he expressly declares that they shall see him no more, till they shall acknowledge him by saying, *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.* See Dr. Sharpe's Second Argument, p. 356.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The subject of the former chapter is here continued, and the great blessings arising from the Gospel of Jesus are set forth.

1. The guilt of sin shall be done away through his atoning blood. *In that day* of the crucifixion of Jesus, *there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem*, to all sinners of every rank and degree, *for sin and for uncleanness*; for all need this cleansing, being defiled with guilt, and by mere nature altogether as an unclean thing before the God of purity; nor can any thing wash out the stains but *this fountain opened*, where there

C H A P. XIV.

The destroyers of Jerusalem destroyed. The coming of Christ, and the graces of his kingdom. The plague of Jerusalem's enemies. A remnant will turn to the Lord, and their spoils shall be holy.

[Before Christ 517.]

BEHOLD, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee.

there is all fulness of merit, and to which all are freely invited, that they may wash and be clean. They who neglect so great a salvation, ignorant of their pollution; or too proud, like Naaman, to stoop to this humbling method of salvation; must perish in their sins.

2. Idolatry shall be rooted out, and the names of their idols be never again mentioned as objects of worship: which was the case with the Jews after their return from captivity. But the promise seems to look farther; namely, to the destruction of the idols of paganism, which fell before the Gospel; and to the rooting out of the image-worship that remains in the antichristian church.

3. The false prophets shall deceive no more. *I will cause the prophets, and the unclean spirit* by which they were actuated, *to pass out of the land*; so that when any pretender to prophecy shall arise, his nearest relatives, Deut. xiii. 6, 11. shall seize, accuse, and execute judgment upon him; yea, so ashamed shall they themselves be of their former pretensions, that they shall strip off the *rough garments* which they had worn out of seeming sanctity and austerity, and say, *I am no prophet, I am an husbandman*, and from my youth was bred to this occupation, unwilling to own that he was ever engaged in any other; and when questioned concerning *the wounds in his hands*, he will reply, to evade the truth, that they were wounds received *in the house of his friends*, not as the rebuke for assuming the prophetic character, as they really were, but as inflicted on himself through excessive grief on the death of his relations or friends. *Note*; (1.) Our dearest relations, who would turn us away from God, must be looked upon with abhorrence. (2.) Pretenders to godliness will sooner or later be detected; the demure look and rough garment of the hypocrite will not always deceive.

Some suppose that the sixth verse refers to Christ, upbraided by the Jews as a false prophet; and from the wounds in his hands they suggest that he suffered justly as a deceiver. To which he replies, that he was so treated indeed among those who should have been his friends; but that the wounds were not for any crime that he had done, but in consequence of the satisfaction which he had undertaken to make to divine justice as the Saviour of mankind; as is implied in the following verse.

2dly, That the Messiah should be cut off, was before prophesied: we have in the latter part of this chapter the execution of that sacred purpose of divine love.

1. God the Father commissions the sword of justice to pierce the Redeemer: *Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, even against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

2 For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

3 ¶ Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.

In essential dignity he was God's fellow, and counted it no robbery to be equal with God; in office he was God's shepherd, appointed to be the great covenant-head of his faithful flock, who should lay down his life for the sins of the world. This sword our sins had provoked: it had long slumbered; but now awakes against the Son of God, since upon him are laid the iniquities of us all: he who bears our sins must carry our sorrows.

2. The sheep hereupon are scattered. Which the great shepherd himself quotes, Matth. xxvi. 31. as fulfilled on that dismal night when he was apprehended, and all his disciples forsook him and fled. But he promises, *I will turn mine hand upon the little ones*. They were now like children, timorous, affrighted, and weak; but soon returned in grief and true repentance, and were then endued with power from on high; so that they went forth bold champions in their master's cause; and God mightily supported them, and gave them wonderful success in their labours.

3. The impenitent Jews shall perish, but some will penitently return, two parts being cut off during their war with the Romans. A *third* shall escape, as through the fire, getting out of Jerusalem to Pella before the Romans formed the siege: and these, refined in the furnace of affliction, returning in true repentance, and proving faithful, will be a people for God, calling upon his name, and answered in all their requests; he will own the relation that they claim to him as their God, and give them every blessing which they can ask or need. Some refer this to the world and church in general, one third of which, they suppose, will scarcely be found faithful amid the far more numerous herd of professors, the hypocrites, formalists, and self-righteous. *Note*; (1.) Those who are saved, are in general first refined in the furnace of affliction. They who were never more or less thus exercised, have reason to fear that they are bastards, and not sons. (2.) They are gracious troubles which serve to purge us from the remaining dross of corruption. (3.) The people of God are all ceaseless in prayer; and they find the blessedness of being so employed, in the answers of grace and peace which he bestows. (4.) They who have taken the Lord for their God, will never have cause to repent of their choice.

C H A P. XIV.

THIS chapter goes on to foretel a siege, in which Jerusalem will be taken and sacked, and half of its inhabitants carried into captivity, while the rest will be enabled to stand their ground. In this critical situation they will be relieved by the arm of divine power, exerting itself wonderfully.

4 And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which *is* before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east, and toward the west, *and there shall be a very great valley*; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

5 And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD

my God shall come, *and* all the faints with thee.

6 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the light shall not be clear, *nor* dark:

7 But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, *that* at evening time it shall be light.

8 And it shall be in that day, *that* living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be.

derfully in their behalf, and attended with the most beneficial consequences; such as living waters going forth out of Jerusalem; the name and majesty of the true God acknowledged through the whole earth; and the entire re-establishment of Jerusalem in security. In the mean time the hostile invaders, debilitated by sickness, thrown into confusion, and falling foul on each other, will yield themselves and their wealth an easy conquest to the assailing Jews. After this, all things in Judah and Jerusalem, from the least to the greatest, shall thenceforward be accounted holy. Such are the great outlines of this extraordinary prophecy; to fill up which with any tolerable certainty, it will be necessary, perhaps, to wait the times of its accomplishment.

Ver. 2. The residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city] It is impossible to reconcile these words with the state of facts at the time when Jerusalem was taken by the Romans; for at that time, we are well assured by Josephus, who was an eye-witness, not only *all* that were in the city were either slain or made captives, but also the city itself was razed to the ground, so as to leave no vestige of a habitation. Bell. Jud. lib. vi. c. 9. and lib. vii. c. 1. Ed. Havercamp. How then could there be a residue not cut off from the city? And if there has been no capture since to which these words can be applied, we must look forward to futurity for the completion of the prophecy. From its being said, that *a residue shall not be cut off from the city*, together with what follows, the course of proceeding, it should seem, will be this: upon the city being taken, the most warlike part of the inhabitants will retire in a body to some strong post near at hand, and stand upon their defence; till, being encouraged by manifest tokens of God's declaring himself in their favour, and perhaps reinforced by their brethren of Judah at large, they shall sally forth, and with the divine assistance completely defeat their enemies, and effect their own deliverance; so that, as is said, *Jerusalem shall again sit in her own place at Jerusalem*. Compare chap. xii. 5, 6, 7. See Blaney. Houbigant is of the same opinion—that this whole chapter refers not to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, but to some future and unknown events of the great and final restoration of the Jews.

Ver. 3. As when he fought] Literally, *According to the day of his fighting*; that is, with thunder and lightning,

storms of wind and hail, earthquakes, &c. See Psa. xviii. 7—16. Hab. iii. 5, &c.

Ver. 4. And his feet shall stand, &c.] Calmet thinks, that by this *cleaving* of the mount of Olives is meant those incisions which the Romans made in it, to carry matter thence for the siege of the city; not observing that the simile is drawn from things which exceed nature, not from those which happen according to the common course of it. But it is certainly beyond nature, that a mountain should so *cleave*, as to leave between the parts which are cleft *a great valley*: it is much more so, that one part of the mountain should remove to the north, the other to the south. Therefore in this place facts and not similes are delivered; and those miracles seem to be foretold which shall happen near Jerusalem at the last return of the Jews. Houbigant. See Ezek. xi. 23. Mount Olivet, we are told by Maundrel, had three tops or eminences, one on the north, one on the south, and one in the middle, whence our blessed Saviour ascended, and where Christians in after times erected a cross, to point out the place of this great transaction.

Ver. 5. And the Lord my God shall come, &c.] *And JEHOVAH shall go, the God of all holy ones, with thee*. This is a literal translation of the Hebrew text, and affords a sense beyond exception or improvement. The same Jehovah, of whom it is said ver. 3. that he would go forth and fight against the un sanctified nations, he as the God, the patron and protector of all holy ones, all true believers, it is here said, will march *with* thee, O Jerusalem, as thine ally and auxiliary. So the preposition *בְּיָמָי*, properly imports. The address is here to Jerusalem in the second person, as it evidently is also, ver. 1.

Ver. 6. And it shall come to pass, &c.] How this will be fulfilled we cannot know till the time of its completion shall arrive; for a fact certainly, not a simile, is here again delivered. We know that in the Scripture, *light* denotes joy and prosperity, and *darkness* adversity. See Houbigant.

Ver. 7. One day] *An extraordinary, or very singular day*.

Ver. 8. Living waters shall go out, &c.] Here again, real waters, not the figurative ones of baptism, or of the Christian doctrine, are meant; for these waters go out *only* to the east and to the west, whereas the evangelical waters went forth into all quarters of the world. Houbigant; who,

9 And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.

10 All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's wine-presses.

11 And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.

12 ¶ And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth.

13 And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the LORD shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his

hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour.

14 And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem: and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance.

15 And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague.

16 ¶ And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of Hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.

17 ¶ And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of Hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.

18 And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

who, instead of former sea, reads eastern sea; and instead of hinder sea,—the western sea.

Ver. 9. *And the Lord shall be king, &c.*] Upon this grand conversion and restoration of the Jews, and coming-in of the fulness of the Gentiles, God shall be glorified with one mind and one mouth over all the earth. *There shall be one Lord, and his name shall be one.* A name was so peculiar an adjunct to a local tutelary deity, that the one supreme God had no name or title of distinction of the local kind. Thus Zechariah, evidently alluding to these notions, when he prophesies of the worship of the Supreme God, unmixed with idolatry, says, *In that day there shall be one Lord, and his name one.* See Divine Legation, book iv. sect. 6.

Ver. 10. *All the land shall be turned, &c.*] *And he shall surround the whole land as a plain, from Geba even to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem; which shall be high, and shall stand firm, &c.* The latter part of this verse describes the extent of the new city of Jerusalem, which the Jews were to rebuild and inhabit; and the words in the next verse, *There shall be no more destruction*, or anathema, shew that the city of Jerusalem itself is here meant, and not the church under that period; for the church can never be said to have been at any time under a curse.

And it shall be lifted up] *And she shall be raised up.* That is, Jerusalem, which is here, as elsewhere, represented as a female figure, raised from the ground, and sitting tranquil on her ancient seat.

From Benjamin's gate, &c.] These points are given, no doubt, to signify that Jerusalem shall again occupy as much

space as ever it did in its most flourishing times. The same intention appears Jer. xxxi. 38—40. Both these places may derive some illustration from comparing them together, and at the same time inspecting the plan of Jerusalem in the Ancient Universal History, vol. i. b. 1. which seems to have been laid down pretty accurately according to the circuit of the walls made by the two companies, Neh. xii. 31—40. and the information collected from other parts of Scripture.

Ver. 13. *And his hand shall rise up, &c.*] *And the hand of one shall cleave to the hand of another.* Houbigant.

Ver. 14. *And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem*] *And Judah also shall fight for Jerusalem.* Not only, the Lord shall fight, (see ver. 3.) but also Judah.

Ver. 17. *Of all the families of the earth*] If, according to the opinion of many learned commentators, by going up to Jerusalem to worship, and to keep the feast of tabernacles, be only meant a conformity to the worship of the one true God, or, which is the same thing, to the Christian religion, there can be no objection to understanding a strict universality of the nations: for it is repeatedly foretold, that a time will come, when “all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before him,” Psa. xxii. 27. Compare Psa. lxxii. 11. lxxxvi. 9. Rev. xi. 15.

Ver. 18. *That have no rain; there, &c.*] *Upon them shall be the plague wherewith the Lord, &c.* Houbigant. The reader will observe, that the prophet, foretelling the blessings arising from the restoration of the Jews, and the conversion of the Gentiles to the Christian faith, draws his images

19 This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

20 ¶ In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the LORD's house shall be like the bowls before the altar.

21 Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the LORD of Hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and see the therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of Hosts.

from the old dispensation; and, as is usual throughout the prophetic writings, expresses the rewards and punishments of the new dispensation, under figures borrowed from the old.

Ver. 20, 21. In that day, &c.] This and the following verse seem to imply the promise of universal peace and holiness; blessings often mentioned in the prophets as concomitants of the flourishing state of Christ's kingdom. The meaning of the passage therefore is, that the *bells*, or furniture of war, belonging to the horses, shall no more be applied to their former use; but shall be looked upon as sacred, and laid up in the armoury of the temple of the Lord, as a memorial of the remarkable success that he had given his people. Yea, every thing under this state shall be holy. Houbigant renders the last clause of ver. 20. *And the pots in the house of Judah shall be [holy] as the bowls before the altar.* The meaning of the last clause of ver. 21. *There shall be no more the Canaanite, &c.* is, "There shall be no more a profane or impious person in the societies of the faithful; nor shall there be any more distinction between Jew and Canaanite." The name of Canaanite and stranger shall be utterly abolished: whoever commences a real believer, shall enter into the house of the Lord, and what he was shall be wholly forgotten. *Canaanite, Jew, Barbarian,* shall be all equal, "provided they truly believe in Christ, are just and faithful." See Calmet.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. *A day of judgment*, which many refer to the taking of Jerusalem by the Romans, when all the brutal rage of war was let loose, and half the people carried into captivity, a remnant being left, even those who, according to the divine warnings, had before saved themselves by flight. Or this may much better refer to the time just preceding the restoration of the Jews and their establishment in their own country, and the fulness of the Gentiles.

2. *A day of mercy*, when Christ shall go forth to fight his people's battles, to destroy their destroyers*. *And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives*, as when he ascended up thence, and quickly after made a way for the Gentile world to draw near unto God, signified by the dividing asunder the mountain, and opening a great valley between, in which Jews and Gentiles should assemble together and incorporate, eager to be admitted into the church which shall now be exceedingly enlarged, flying thither with as much speed as those in the days of Josiah fled from the earthquake; and there God's presence in the midst of his saints shall eminently appear.

* In these Reflections, I would wish to consider the chapter chiefly, if not intirely, in a spiritual sense, which is certainly implied, and carries with it far the most important meaning.

Some refer this to the second coming of Christ, when they suppose that he will descend on that very spot from which he ascended; that the valley shall be the place where the dead shall be raised and assembled, many of whom will then be flying to the mountains to cover them from the presence of the Judge, now appearing with ten thousands of his saints, and be more terrified at his coming than those were who fled from the earthquake in Uzziah's days, which threatened to swallow them up. It must be confessed, that this prophecy is of very difficult interpretation. However, we may learn, (1.) That the Lord Jesus will come to judge the world, and that it highly imports us to be ready to meet him. (2.) That it will be too late then to fly from his wrath, if we have not before betaken ourselves to the refuge of his mercy. (3.) That they will then be truly happy who can say, *My God shall come*; for he will be most welcome to all who have an interest in his love and favour.

3. *It shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark*: which may refer either to the imperfect attainments of Christ's saints upon earth, compared with what they expect hereafter; or to the dispensations of God's providence toward his church, over which there still hang clouds of trouble whilst in this militant state below. *But it shall be one day*, a short time that this will be the case, which shall be known to the Lord, who takes notice of his faithful people under all their remaining infirmities and troubles. *At evening-time it shall be light*: when the day of time shall come to its period, and eternity open to view, then all shall be light to God's faithful people for ever; when their faith and patience shall be crowned with glory; their sun shall no more go down, nor their moon withdraw itself; and therefore in our present darkness and troubles we should wait still upon God, and hope for a happy issue at last out of all.

Some refer all this to the spiritual reign of Christ, when his Gospel shall be spread abroad in the latter day, and the darkness of Mohammedism, paganism, and popery be utterly dispelled.

2dly, Farther blessings are promised to God's Israel.

1. *Living waters shall go out from Jerusalem*, even the Gospel, which began to be preached at Jerusalem, and went forth from east to west, into all parts of the world, and will continue to the end of time to flow, till the earth shall be covered with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

2. Christ will erect an universal kingdom in the earth. All competitors will at last be destroyed: *there shall be one Lord* owned and acknowledged through the whole world: *and his name one*, every distinction of party, and difference of opinion and worship, will be laid aside, and all with

one

one heart and one mouth shall unite in prayer and praise before him.

3. The church shall be glorious, abundantly replenished, and the abode of peace for ever. *All the land shall be turned as a plain, every mountain and hill laid low, from Geba to Rimmon, all opposition destroyed, and Jerusalem, the Gospel-church, lifted up as a beacon on a hill, whither all the converts shall flock together; so that it shall be filled with inhabitants from one end to the other. Wars shall then cease; no civil discords nor ecclesiastical anathemas shall disturb the peace of God's people; they shall dwell in safety, and none evermore make them afraid.*

4. The enemies of the church shall be utterly cut off. Their once pampered *flesh* shall be emaciated, and consume away; their *eyes*, full of covetousness, envy, and lasciviousness, shall rot in their sockets; and their *tongues*, defiled with blasphemy, reproach, and falsehood, shall perish. God will put his terrors in the midst of them; and in their confusion every man's sword shall be against his fellow, so that they shall be their own executioners. The faints of God, who go forth to fight, will have nothing to do but to gather the immensity of rich spoils; and the very beasts of these sinners shall share their plagues, and be destroyed with them.

3dly, The destruction of the wicked shall bring a great accession of converts to the church.

1. *Every one that is left*—all who have been faithful to the grace of God offered to them, and who have dwelt among the enemies of Christ, shall now be brought home to him, and with his people *go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles*: not that these Jewish festivals will be then observed; but Christ's believing people will, with such joy as they testified on this occasion, commemorate his wonderful deliverance of them from the bondage of sin and Satan, and be ceaseless in their supplications to him that he would perfect their redemption, and bring them into the heavenly Canaan, the final and eternal rest which remaineth for the people of God.

2. They who refuse or neglect this holy worship shall

be punished with famine; either literally, for want of rain the earth shall give them no food; or, spiritually, they shall be destitute of the heavenly influences of grace, and deprived of the Gospel; given up to the curse of barrenness, and perishing in their iniquities. And if Egypt, which owes its fertility to the overflowing of the Nile more than to the clouds, be found among those who are culpable, her punishment shall be the same: he, who prevents the rain from falling on others, will prevent the Nile from overflowing their land, and give them the same curse of barrenness and famine. *Note*: (1.) Though some sinners may think their situation will be a protection to them from the threatened evils, they will find that God's arm can as easily reach them as others. (2.) They who live in neglect of God's worship will surely die under his curse.

3. When the wicked are consumed, the church shall appear glorious in the beauty of holiness. Upon the very *bells of their horses* shall be engraven, as on the high-priest's mitre, *Holiness unto the Lord*, the people of Jesus being a holy priesthood, their profession public, their conversation exemplary; and in all their actions, civil as well as religious, one uniform tenor of holiness will appear. *And the pots in the Lord's house*, which the priests used in their apartments, *shall be like the bowls before the altar*, consecrated to God, and employed in a holy manner; God's spiritual priests making even their common meals a sacrifice, by their prayers, thanksgiving, and gracious use of God's creatures; whether they eat or drink, doing all to the glory of God. *And every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of Hosts*, consecrated to his glory as the vessels of the sanctuary. *And all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and setbe therein*, the ceremonial distinction between one vessel and another no longer subsisting, and the real holiness of heart and life in every member of the church rendering their offerings acceptable, through Jesus Christ, in every place. *And in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of Hosts*, the church being thoroughly purged of all the ungodly and profane. O Lord, hasten the day!

THE BOOK
OF THE
PROPHET MALACHI.

MALACHI, the last of the twelve lesser prophets, is so much unknown, that it is doubted whether the name be a proper name, or only a generical name, signifying the angel of the Lord, a messenger, a prophet; for it appears by Haggai, chap. i. 13. and by this prophet, whom we cite by the name of Malachi, chap. iii. 1. that in these times the name of Malach-Jehovah, or the messenger of the Lord, was given to the prophets. The LXX have rendered the Hebrew word מלאכי malachi, by his angel, instead of my angel; and several of the fathers have quoted Malachi under the name of the angel of the Lord. It is thought probable by many, that Malachi was no other than Ezra: but why should there not have been a real person of this name, which is not more expressive than many other names of the prophets and sacred writers? We cannot help thinking therefore, with Justin Martyr, and with most of the primitive fathers, that Malachi is a proper name; and that this prophet was contemporary with Haggai, Zechariah, or Nehemiah, as he speaks of the temple as already built. It appears, that he prophesied when great disorders reigned among the priests and people of Judah, who are reproved by him. He inveighs against the priests; he reproaches the people with having taken strange wives: he reproves them for their inhumanity towards their brethren; their too frequently divorcing their wives, and their neglecting to pay their tithes and first-fruits. He seems to allude to the covenant which Nehemiah renewed with the Lord, assisted by the priests and the chief of the nation. See chap. ii. 4, 5. He prophesies of the coming of John the Baptist, and of the twofold coming of the Saviour, in very express terms. He is the last of the prophets of the synagogue, and lived about four hundred years before Christ. Bishop Lowth says of him, that his style is such as intimates him to have lived in the decline of the Hebrew poetry, which decayed very much after the Babylonish captivity. See his 21st Prelection, and Calmet.

C H A P. I.

Malachi complaineth of Israel's unkindness, of their irreligion, and profaneness.

[Before Christ about 400.]

THE burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.

2 I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob.

3 And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.

C H A P. I.

Ver. 1. The burden] The charge, or message.

Ver. 2, 3. Yet I loved Jacob, &c.] These words are

not to be taken according to modern ideas; for in Scripture, when love and hatred are spoken of God, are set in opposition to each other, and applied to his dispensations towards

4 Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places: thus saith the LORD of Hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever.

5 And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel.

6 ¶ A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of Hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?

7 Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible.

8 And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is

it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of Hosts.

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

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

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

towards particular people, the propositions are not to be understood separate, but are to be taken together; and they will then only imply a preference of one to the other, or that he loved Esau less than Jacob, or shewed him less favour, when he gave him and his posterity the desert mountains, and Jacob and his sons a land flowing with milk and honey; for God is the supreme arbiter of his own gifts. St. Paul accommodates the present sentence to his subject, Rom. ix. 13. proving by this example that God hath mercy, or shews his distinguished favour to whom he will, and in like manner withholds it. The reader will observe, that this is not spoken of Esau and Jacob personally, but of their posterity. Houbigant renders the latter part of ver. 3. *And made his mountains desert, and his inheritance the habitations of the wilderness.*

Ver. 4. *They shall build, &c.*] “The Edomites may rebuild their cities, but the Lord will raise against them the Maccabees, who shall subject them, and constrain them to receive circumcision, and the other laws and customs of the Jews.” See 1 Macc. v. 3. 2 Macc. x. 16, 17. and Joseph. Antiq. lib. xiii. cap. 17.

Ver. 5. *And your eyes shall see, &c.*] That is, the eyes of Israel, who are here addressed. See ver. i. The latter clause should be rendered, *The Lord hath done wonderfully for the borders of Israel.*

Ver. 6. *A son honoureth his father, &c.*] “Those degrees of respect which were due to human authority, are in a more eminent manner to be paid to the supreme Lord of all. So the priests, who are dedicated to my service in a peculiar manner, behave themselves undutifully by that disrespect which they show to my name and worship.” See Lowth.

Ver. 7. *In that ye say, &c.*] Houbigant puts a semi-

colon at the end of this verse, and begins the eighth thus, *And when ye bring the blind for sacrifice, this seems not evil, nor when ye offer the lame and the sick.* The prophet reproves them for paying no reverence to the altar of God, but admitting victims of every kind, however contrary to the law, that they might make as much gain as possible.

Ver. 9. *This hath been by your means*] *Since this seems easy to you, will he, &c.* Houbigant. The avaricious priests deny that there was any thing in the choice of victims, and aver that God would be as propitious to them upon the offering of an unclean as of a clean sacrifice. Therefore the prophet calls upon them to make the trial, and to ask some sign of God, that they may prove his attention and regard to them.

Ver. 10. *Who is there even among you, &c.*] *Yea, truly the doors will be shut because of you, that you may not kindle fire, &c.* The similitude is continued which was taken from a prince or governor, ver. 8. who would reject a blind or sick animal brought to him for tribute, and shut his doors against the offerer and his gift. Houbigant.

Ver. 11. *For, from the rising of the sun, &c.*] In this and the preceding verse, we have two important points of our religion declared in the fullest manner: First, the abolition of the sacrifices and ceremonies of the ancient law. The second, a pure sacrifice offered to the Lord in every place and in every nation; the synagogue rejected, and the church of the Gentiles chosen. The prophet describes the Christian sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving, by the external rites of the Jewish worship. *Incense* was considered as an emblem or figure of prayer by the Jews themselves. This spiritual service, the prophet says, shall be offered up in every place; whereas the Jewish worship was confined to the temple. The words of our Saviour, John, iv. 21, 22.

are

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

13 Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of Hosts; and ye brought *that which was* torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye

brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD.

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

are a good commentary on this passage. Nothing can be more simple than the principle here enforced, or more agreeable to the rules of just interpretation, than to suppose that the language of the law is employed to convey these prophetic intimations of the Gospel. This offering is said to be *pure*, to intimate, that it would not be less acceptable for not being at the temple. See the note on Zech. xiv. 18. Div. Leg. book vi. sect. 6. and Calmet.

Ver. 12. And the fruit thereof, &c.] And even the meat of it also is contemptible. Houbigant.

Ver. 13. Ye said also, Behold] And in that ye say, depart hence; and while you reject some, you afterwards bring that which is torn, or lame, or sick, for an offering. Should I, &c. Houbigant. Those who understand it according to our translation, explain it thus; "You who have complained that a constant attendance on my altar was a wearisome employment, and that the victims which you offered were not given by the people, but were the fruits of your own labours, and were bestowed out of your tithes." See Lowth, and Grotius.

Ver. 14. Which hath in his flock a male] Who, having in his flock that which is strong and sound, afterwards, having made a vow, sacrificeth unto the Lord that which is sick; for, &c. Houbigant.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, This word of the Lord to Israel is called a *burden*: it contained sharp rebukes, and bound upon the impenitent a load of wrath, which would sink them into the belly of hell. The charge against Israel here advanced is, their ingratitude. God asserts his love, which he had shewed them from the days of old. *I have loved you, saith the Lord*; but they seemed insensible of the mercy, and unaffected with it: *Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us?* as if the instances of his regard were so slight and so few, that they had little or no obligations to him: to convince them of their baseness, he proves, by the distinguishing favours shewn them, the love that he had had towards them.

1. He had preferred Jacob, though the younger brother, to Esau, and entailed upon him the covenant of promise in respect to the birth of the Messiah, and the variety of distinguishing privileges flowing therefrom. *Was not Esau Jacob's brother?* and, as his elder, should in the common course of things have succeeded to the birthright; but God had been pleased to choose the younger, and reject the first-born. *Yet I loved Jacob*; chose him when yet unborn to be the great progenitor of the Messiah, and of that nation which I had chosen to preserve the purity of my worship and the glory of my great name: *and I hated Esau*; to far as to deprive him of the birthright, and of the

peculiar honour and privileges bestowed upon Jacob and his posterity.

2. Their posterity were deeply affected by this original difference which God had made between their great progenitors, not only in respect to the spiritual privileges of their respective dispensations, but also in respect to temporal blessings. *I laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness*; as was done by the Chaldeans; and though Judæa was also desolated by them; yet there was a distinguishing difference; the ruins of the one were for a while only; of the other perpetual. Both nations had sinned with a very high hand: but as the Messiah should come of the Jews, they should be preserved as a nation, while the others should be obliterated from the face of the earth. For, though the Edomites attempted to repair their breaches, God disappointed their endeavours: *They shall build, but I will throw down*; God was against them: and who ever hardened their hearts against him, and prospered? *and they shall call them, The border of wickedness*; their sins will be notorious, and read in their sufferings: *the people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever.* The offers of grace made to them, will render them utterly inexcusable on the great day of account: but their sins were so enormous as a nation, that they most completely filled up the measure of their iniquities, and provoked God to cut them off for ever. *And your eyes shall see the desolations of Edom; and ye shall say the Lord will be magnified from the border of Israel*; he justly deserves and demands their praises: not to have offered them, must prove their base ingratitude.

2dly, The bad example of the priests being of most pernicious consequence to the people, God sends to them a severe rebuke.

1. God tells them what he might justly have expected from them. *A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master*; at least, all admit that this ought to be, and they are accounted unnatural, undutiful, and wicked, who act otherwise. *If then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear?* If reverence, respect, and fear, be paid to an earthly parent or master, how much more due are they to our Father and Master in heaven? and to rob him of this his honour, how much more criminal?

2. He charges them with the insolent contempt with which they had treated him. *They despised his name*; paid no regard to his honour, and neglected his worship and service; *and profaned it*, by their irreverent use of it, and perverting it to serve their own pride, covetousness, and luxury, bringing the highest reproach upon it by their whole conduct; for nothing so deeply dishonours God as the bad lives of those who call themselves his ministers. And yet with daring effrontery they deny the charge: *Ye*

lav

C H A P. II.

He sharply reproveth the priests for neglecting their covenant; and the people for idolatry, for adultery, and for infidelity.

[Before Christ about 400.]

AND now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you.

say, wherein have we despised thy name? either they were so ignorant of the divine law, as to think that they had observed it; or so *atheistical*, as to imagine that God could not detect them. Thus hardened sinners justify themselves in evil, and say, like the adulterers, *I have done no wickedness*; but God will reprove them, and set in order the things that they have done.

[1.] *Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar*; the shew-bread or the meat-offering, which accompanied their daily sacrifice, was made either of the refuse of the wheat, or of flour damaged and unfit for use: *and yet ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee?* as if there was no harm in what they had done: and this attempt to vindicate themselves was an aggravation of their crime.

[2.] *Ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible*; perhaps not publicly, but among themselves, they treated the divine institutions with ridicule; and though it was for their interest to keep up the form of religion, they talked of it as a mere juggle designed to keep the vulgar in awe: or if they said not so much, their conduct spoke aloud their sentiments. They paid no veneration to the sanctuary, or its ordinances: *Ye say, the table of the Lord is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible*, as if it was no better than any other table: their own tables were better served than his; and the fat and the blood, which were the Lord's portion, were in their eyes contemptible, and very little deserving of so many laws concerning them.

[3.] They offered the blind and the lame, and the torn and the sick, for sacrifices to God; such as they would not have dared to have presented to their governor, because he would have esteemed it an affront. And is *not this evil?* contrary to God's express command, and a designed insult. *Note*; They who think that God will be satisfied with careless, cold, negligent, hasty prayers, the labour of the lips or the book, where all the life of devotion, of faith and love, is wanting, are but offering the blind and lame for sacrifice, and their services will be accounted but an abomination.

[4.] They were perfect mercenaries, and served merely for hire. They would not shut a door of the temple, nor kindle a fire there, unless they were well paid: the work of the sanctuary was no delight to them; the wages was all that they looked at. *Note*; Though God would have us live by the altar that we serve, yet to have an eye to this as the inducement to undertake the ministry, is in God's sight most abominable; and such hirelings will be abhorred and disowned by the great *Bishop of souls*.

[5.] The service in which they were obliged to be employed was a *weariness* to them. They were always complaining of the *hard duty*: to be so constant in attendance on the temple, so strict in the observance of the forms and

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

3 Behold, I will corrupt your feed, and

ordinances prescribed, they thought quite tiresome, and snuffed at it, with discontent and reluctance dragging themselves to the task, and hurrying it over as fast as possible. Would to God these had been the only ministers of the sanctuary on whom such things were chargeable!

3. He expostulates with them on this conduct of theirs. *Should I accept this of your hands?* can such sacrifices and services be pleasing? No, saith God; *I have no pleasure in you; neither will I accept an offering at your hand*; since they had made themselves vile, and *this* had been by *their means*, with their connivance and encouragement, that such despicable sacrifices were offered; *Shall I regard your persons?* saith the Lord of Hosts. It was impossible that he should, and therefore their prayers, which the prophet ironically calls them to offer, must needs be unavailing and rejected. *Note*; If our persons are not accepted of God through the blood of atonement, all our prayers must needs be fruitless.

Some understand ver. 9. as containing a serious exhortation to the priests, who had been the chief authors of all the evil, to repent of their sins, and cry to God for mercy on the behalf of themselves and the people, and not to flatter them with vain hopes that God accepted their persons more than others, seeing that the holiness of their office aggravated their sins, and would increase their punishment.

4. Since they thus dishonoured God, he will glorify himself, rejecting them, and turning to the Gentiles, setting up his church from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same. *My name*, saith he, *shall be great among the Gentiles*; they shall render him that glory of which Israel had robbed him: *and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name*, the incense of prayer and praise, arising from all the worshipping assemblies of true believers, who are consecrated spiritual priests, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, *and a pure offering*, even themselves, their bodies, souls, and spirits, a living sacrifice: *for my name shall be great among the heathen*: it is repeated, to assure them of the certainty of the event; and that, when the time came that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, they might remember that the mouth of the Lord had spoken it.

5. A curse is pronounced on these careless and wicked priests, and on all others who are deceivers like them. *Cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing*. Though they might think thus to satisfy their consciences, and the corrupt priests, indulgent casuists, flattered them that it would be accepted; they were both deceivers and deceived. God is not to be thus mocked; they would put a cheat upon him, but in fact deceived themselves, and brought wrath

spread dung upon your faces, *even* the dung of your solemn feasts; and *one* shall take you away with it.

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

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

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

7 For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he *is* the messenger of the LORD of Hosts.

8 But ye are departed out of the way; ye

have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of Hosts.

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

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

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

12 The LORD will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that

wrath upon their souls. He will be served with the best, or not at all: to attempt to put him off with the refuse, is increasing our provocations; *For I am a great King, saith the Lord of Hosts*, and therefore to be honoured according to his excellent greatness; and *my name is dreadful among the heathen*; the judgments that he had executed upon them made it so; and their more provoking wickedness would bring down still heavier vengeance upon their heads.

CHAP. II.

Ver. 1. This commandment is for you] *This decree is for you*, or, *this is decreed concerning you*; for here is no commandment given to the priest, only punishment is denounced upon them, if they do not repent.

Ver. 2. I will even send a curse upon you] *I will send a famine upon you*. The last clause should be rendered, *Yea, I will therefore curse them* [that is to say, the blessings], *because you do not repent. I will curse your blessings*, means "those gifts which are brought to you from the productions of the earth;" for these productions are frequently called *blessings* in Scripture.

Ver. 3. Behold, I will corrupt your seed, &c.] *Behold, I am about to take away the shoulder from you* [namely, the right shoulder, which, by the law, was the peculiar portion of the priests]; and *to throw the fat into your faces, even the fat which is offered in your sacrifices* [meaning the fat which covered the intestines, and which was burnt upon the altar]; and *it shall take you away with it*. God threatens that he will not accept this gift, but will reject it, and throw it with disdain into the faces of the priests, and by that stroke repulse or drive them from the altar. He goes on, *ver. 4. And ye shall know, that I have sent this commandment or statute concerning you*, [that is to say, to drive you from mine altar, *ver. 1.*] *that it may be instead of the covenant with*

Levi, saith the Lord of Hosts. That is, "this shall be established, that Levi be driven from the priesthood;" for *ברית berith*, is here taken in a bad sense, as this passage is full of threats, and not of promises; and therefore the word signifies here, not *covenant*, properly speaking, but that which is ratified, certainly fixed and determined, as in many other places. This is Houbigant's interpretation.

Ver. 5. My covenant was with him, &c.] Here the word *covenant* is taken in a good sense; for in this and the two following verses, the nature of the covenant of God with Levi is explained, as in the eighth verse these corrupt priests are reproved for having violated that covenant. The passage should be rendered, *I gave them to him, that he might greatly fear me, and tremble at my name*. *Ver. 6. That the law of truth might be in his mouth, and no iniquity be found in his lips: that he might walk with me in peace and equity; that he might turn, &c.* *Ver. 7. That the priest's lips might keep knowledge, and that they might seek, &c.* See Houbigant, who, instead of *Have been partial*, *ver. 9.* reads, *Have had respect to persons*.

Ver. 10. Have we not all one Father? &c.] Here a new section begins, wherein the prophet severely reproves the people for marrying strange wives, which was much practised in Ezra's and Nehemiah's time, who expressed great detestation of it. *Ezra, ix. 1, 2. Neh. xiii. 23.* The prophet begins his expostulation with putting them in mind that they owned one God and Father, in opposition to the idols of the heathen, and therefore should dwell with one another as brethren, being nearly allied by spiritual, as well as fleshly relation. See *ver. 14.* and *Lowth*.

Ver. 12. The Lord will cut off, &c.] *Whoever doeth this, the Lord will cut off for him both boy and girl, from the tabernacle of Jacob, that he may not offer an offering, &c.* Houbigant.

Ver.

offereth an offering unto the LORD of Hosts.

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

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

15 And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.

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

17 ¶ Ye have wearied the LORD with your

Ver. 13. And this have ye done again] This also you have done; you have covered the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with groanings; so that no respect is now had to your offering, nor is any thing accepted from your hand. The priests not only had married strange wives, but also divorced those of their own country whom they had married; with whose tears the altar was imbrued, when these wives offered up their sacrifices to God, entreating him to give their husbands a better mind; whom God heard so effectually, that he would not accept the sacrifices of their husbands, on account of the tears and just complaints of their wives. Houbigant.

Ver. 15, 16. And did not he make one?] Houbigant renders the passage, And hath he made thee one flesh and one spirit with her? And what does he require but a godly seed, and that you may mutually keep your spirit, and not deal treacherously? &c. Ver. 16. For whoever putteth away his wife through hatred, saith the Lord, hideth iniquity in his garment: therefore, &c. Among the various interpretations of these words, this seems the most probable, says Lowth, that the prophet puts the Jews in mind of the first institution of marriage in paradise, as Christ did afterwards upon a like occasion, Matth. xix. 3—5. and tells them, that God made but one man at first, and made the woman out of him, when he could have created more women if he had pleased; to instruct men that this was the true pattern of marriage, ordained for sincere love and undivided affection, and best served the chief end of it; namely, the religious education of children. (Dr. Pocock tells us, that the Easterns frequently call a wife by the name of a garment. See Deut. xxii. 30.) According to the interpretation given above, the meaning of the 16th verse will be, that God hates divorcing a former wife to take in one of a strange nation, or that any should bring into his family an illegitimate wife, over and above that whom he had legally married.

Ver. 17. Ye have wearied the Lord, &c.] A new discourse begins here, and these words properly belong to the next chapter, where an answer is given to the objection proposed. See ver. 2, 3. 5. 18. It is the old objection against Providence, taken from the prosperity of the wicked; which implied, as they thought, either that their works were pleasing to God, or else that he disregarded human affairs, and would never call men to an account for their actions. Every one that doeth evil is good, &c. See

Jer. xii. 1—3. and Ps. lxxiii. Instead of, When ye say, &c. we may read, In your saying of every evil doer, that he is good,—and, or otherwise, where is the God of judgment?

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The word of God in this chapter is particularly directed to the priests. *And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you;* and they were bound deeply to consider the divine rebuke here given them. The prophet shews,

1. What was their duty. *The priests' lips should keep knowledge;* their mind should be stored with divine wisdom; they should be wise expositors of the law of God; ready to answer every case proposed to them, and diligent to preach and inculcate the truths of God: *and they, the people, should seek the law at his mouth;* teachable and inquisitive; desiring to know the mind of the Lord; humble hearers, and ready to follow his will, so far as it is made known to them: *for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts;* distinguished with this high honour, and employed in this high office to carry God's messages to men, and, as an ambassador, to transact the great concerns which belong to the eternal world. Such, therefore, were bound by every obligation to walk worthy of their high vocation and calling.

2. What had been their practice? the very contrary to all this. *But ye are departed out of the way;* in principle and practice utterly apostatized from God; *ye have caused many to stumble at the law;* corrupted by their false doctrines, and emboldened by their ill examples; for nothing tends to make men infidels and libertines, so much as the wicked, careless, and worldly lives of those who pretend to be God's ministers. *Ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi;* defeated the great end and intention of it; as if the priesthood, instead of being instituted in order to lead sinners to a pardoning God, and make them holy and happy, was designed merely to enrich the priests, and fatten them with the spoils of the altar. *Ye have not kept my ways;* neither the moral nor ceremonial commandments: *but have been partial in the law,* in their observance of it; or *accepted persons in the law;* giving wrong judgments in favour of some, and to the prejudice of others.

3. Their sins were greatly aggravated by the consideration of the peculiar honour which God had put upon them in this covenant of priesthood established with their fathers,

words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied *him*? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he

delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?

and by their degeneracy from their pious examples. *My covenant was with Levi*; God took that tribe into a peculiar relation, to attend solely on his worship; a covenant of *life and peace*, containing a promise of long life and prosperity to themselves here, and of endless life and peace hereafter, if they proved faithful. And also their ministrations were intended to be *life* to the guilty sinner, whose iniquities, which called for death, should be removed by faith in the blood of the sacrifices offered, as typical of the great Sacrifice; and *peace* with an offended God should be restored to their troubled consciences. *And I gave them to him*, the blessings of life and peace, *for the fear wherewith he feared me*; he rewarded the zeal of Levi, Exod. xxxiii. 26. and the boldness of Phinehas, Num. xxv. 11, 12. with the settlement of the priesthood in that tribe and family: *and he was afraid before my name*; continuing faithful in God's service, jealous of offending, approving himself in all simplicity before him. *The law of truth was in his mouth*; he always spoke according to the oracles of God; *and iniquity was not found in his lips*, he never perverted the truth to flatter the great, nor concealed what would be offensive in order to please men; but plainly, freely, and fully, in all cases declared the word of God; and, in matters of judicature, decided with strictest impartiality, without respect of persons. *He walked with me in peace and equity*; his life adorned his doctrine; he was himself a man of peace, and the peace-maker among others; of unimpeached integrity, as ministers should be; an example to the flock in every good word and work: *and did turn many away from iniquity*; his life gave weight to his preaching, and God bestowed success on his labours; so that they were effectual to the converting of many sinners from the evil of their ways: and every faithful preacher of God's word may expect to see such fruit of their ministry, when they thus walk and speak; and as the blessed issue of such a conversation, after having turned many to righteousness, they shall shine as the stars in the firmament for ever and ever. Such godly priests as are here described had there been of old in the Jewish church; and to have been descended from them, and inherited the covenant of priesthood, and yet to have degenerated from their examples, and betrayed the trust delivered down to them, was the aggravated crime of that generation. Some apply this to Christ, of whom indeed the Levitical priesthood was a type and figure, and in whom most eminently these things were fulfilled. With him the everlasting covenant of *life and peace* was established, who is the purchaser of both for his faithful saints, and they are given into his hands to be distributed to such; and he has obtained this life and peace for them, because he *feared*, humbled himself to obey the precept, and submitted to the penalty of the law for us. *In his mouth the law of truth*, the gospel of our salvation, was found; in his lips was no guile; perfectly spotless he was in all his conversation, and turning many from iniquity, even all who ever have or ever shall have believed in and cleaved to him.

4. Judgment is denounced upon them. They had already begun to feel God's displeasure; and to the uttermost it shall light upon them. [1.] They had begun to feel God's wrath. *I have already cursed your blessings*; they had no comfort in their work, nor any enjoyment of their wages; all their temporal blessings were embittered, and nothing prospered in their hands: *because ye do not lay it to heart*, to repent of your sins, and glorify God in your ministry. *Therefore have I also made you contemptible*; since they had made themselves vile, God justly exposed them *before all the people*, and returned upon their own heads the contempt that they had shewn of his service. Nor can there be conceived a more infamous and despicable character than that of a profane, wicked, and negligent minister. [2.] What they had felt, if they continued impenitent, was but the prelude to greater evils in store for them. *If ye will not bear these warnings, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of Hosts*, by an immediate return to him with broken hearts, and desire of ministering henceforth to God's glory, *I will even send a curse upon you*: even that wrath which shall burn like fire: *and I will curse your blessings*, their worldly good things shall be embittered with the sense of his displeasure, or destroyed. *Behold, I will corrupt your seed*, that it shall rot under the clod, and famine be the consequence; *and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts*; so far should these be from pleasing God, that he would treat them with the utmost contempt and aversion, as if the dung of the beasts which they brought were cast into their faces: *and one shall take you away*; either the Romans, or any other person would count them fit only for a dunghill; or the devil, the sinner's tormentor, shall seize them, and drag them with him into the pit of destruction. *Note*; (1.) They who rest on the external performances of religion, so far from pleasing God, will find that their dependence on these will render them abominable in his sight. (2.) The day is coming, when God will take away all the wicked from the earth, and deliver them over to the tormentors.

2dly, As corrupt principles naturally lead to corrupt practices; so, on the other hand, the love of sin and the service of it harden the heart in infidelity and atheism.

1. Their practices were very bad. In general they *dealt treacherously every man against his brother*; perverting justice, and having respect to persons, and in all their dealings full of dishonesty; thus *profaning the covenant of their fathers*, wherein such injustice and fraud were forbidden; and which was peculiarly criminal in them, who had *one father*, were brethren in a peculiar sense, as sprung from Abraham, and *one God* their Creator (not merely as men, but), who had formed them in a covenant of national peculiarity as a people for himself. But of all their treacherous dealings, that which especially is here brought to account is, their violation of God's covenant with regard to their marriages, both taking wives of the heathen, which had been so expressly forbidden, Exod. xxxiv. 15,

C H A P. III.

Of the messenger, majesty, and grace of Christ. Of the rebellion, sacrilege, and infidelity of the people. The promise of blessing to them that fear God.

[Before Christ about 400.]

BEHOLD, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me:

and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of Hosts.

2 But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appear-

16, and abusing and divorcing those of their own nation.

[1.] They took wives of the heathen, called here *the daughters of a strange god*, trained in the worship and service of idols as a child in the family; and this was *to profane the holiness of the Lord which he loved*. They were set apart for a peculiar people, dedicated to God, and to be observant of his holy law; and he then loved and delighted in them, when they approved their fidelity to him; but by these strange marriages they *profaned* their covenant of separation, and became an *abomination* in the sight of God; for which he threatens *to cut them off*, both *master and scholar*; or, as in the margin of our English Bibles, *both him that wakeneth*, the magistrates and elders, whose office it was to call and excite the people to their duty; and *him that answereth*; the people in general, who should be obedient to their admonitions. These God will destroy together, and *him that offereth an offering unto the Lord of Hosts*, the priests who should be found guilty of the like crime; as many of them were, Ezra, x. 18. 44. Note; (1.) They who profess the faith of Jesus should no more be yoked now with unbelievers, than these with the *daughters of a strange god*; and ministers especially should shun so unequal a connection. (2.) Nothing more fatally endangers the soul, and exposes it to everlasting perdition, than rashly taking those to be our wives or husbands, who are dead in trespasses and sins. The daughter of a strange god will much sooner make a convert of her husband to idolatry, to the ways of sin and this world, than he can ever hope to bring her to the knowledge and worship of Jesus.

[2.] *This have ye done again, or in the second place*; abused and divorced the wives of their own nation, probably to make room for these foreigners; so that they *covered the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying*; complaining of the ill usage of their husbands: *inasmuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good-will at your hand*. These tears stood on the altar as a memorial against them; and all their offerings were but hypocritical, while they persisted in such wickedness. *Yet ye say, Wherefore?* why should not God accept our offerings? The reason is obvious: *because the Lord hath been witness of those plighted vows which were exchanged between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously*; divorcing her, or marrying others to vex her; and he will be an awful avenger of this breach of contract, aggravated as the sin is by various considerations. She is a *wife of youth*; placed her affections upon thee in those best days of youth and beauty, and therefore not afterwards to be neglected or abhorred: *she is thy companion*; has been the partner of all thy cares and griefs, and borne an equal share in them: *and the wife of thy covenant*; thou

art bound to her by every sacred tie, till death shall part; and therefore it would be most cruel, base, ungrateful, and unjust, to treat her with falsehood, or break the marriage-bond. *And did not he make one?* When the great Creator formed us, did it not evidently appear, that he intended that one man should have but one wife, in the case of our first parents; yet *had he the residue of the Spirit*, and could as easily have formed many Eves as one. *And wherefore one?* The reason is, *that he might seek a godly seed, or a seed of God*; a noble and legitimate offspring, a seed to serve him, which is the great end of marriage; not to gratify men's lawless lusts and appetites; but to beget children who may be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. *Therefore take heed to your spirit*; keep your hearts, keep your eye, keep every wandering desire in subjection, which would lead you after forbidden objects: *and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth*; but be constant, faithful, affectionate, and cleave to her alone: *for the Lord the God of Israel saith, that he hateth putting away*; and though suffered for the hardness of their hearts, to prevent worse consequences, it was displeasing to God, and contrary to his original institution; and therefore the author of such separation will be abhorred of God. *For one covereth violence with his garment*, and thinks that by pretending the permission of the law he can cover the violence done to his wife by the divorce; or he grieves, vexes, and ill uses her in private; and in public casts his garment over her, as if he would protect and cherish her; but God sees and will punish the unfaithful: *therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously*; and great need there is that we, whose hearts are by nature so corrupt, should take heed to them; especially in this estate we need watch against every alienation of affection and unkindness; for if but once a breach be made, the mischief is often afterwards irreparable.

2. Their principles were corrupt, and their words corresponded with their works. *Ye have wearied the Lord with your words*; speaking perversely, and vindicating themselves in their wickedness, which was highly provoking. *Yet ye say, wherein have we wearied him?* denying the charge, and maintaining their innocence, which aggravated their crime. *When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them*; observing the prosperity of the wicked, they concluded that God approved and rewarded him, which cast the most blasphemous imputation on the holiness of God. Or, *Where is the God of judgment?* why does he not appear to punish sin as he had threatened? They infer from his patience, that he has forsaken the earth; and that, let men live as they list, they have nothing to fear. Such infidel scoffers there were of old, who said, *Where is the promise of his coming?* and such there still are, who put far

eth? for he *is* like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap :

3 And he shall sit *as* a refiner and purifier of silver : and he shall purify the sons of Levi,

away the evil day, and say, *Tush, God careth not for it* ; but they will be terribly undeceived when this God of judgment shortly appears to punish ungodly sinners, among their other crimes, *for all the hard speeches they have spoken against him* ; Jude, 15.

C H A P. III.

Ver. 1. Behold, I will send my messenger, &c.] Here is a description of two persons whom God promises to send to the Jews. The one God calls *my angel or messenger*, whose errand is said to be to prepare the way before me ; meaning, that he should be a *prophet* of note, (for so the Hebrew word מלאך *malaak* has been interpreted in other parts of the Old Testament,) who should usher in the LORD who was to follow him,—and supply the place of a harbinger to a great Prince ; and consequently, from the nature of his employ, was as much inferior to the Lord who was to come after him, as servants are to him whose forerunners they are appointed. The other is represented in very high characters, as *that Lord whom they sought, or expected to come* ; as the *Angel or Messenger of the covenant, in whom they delighted* ; that is to say, under or by whom they promised themselves all felicity ; and again as a severe *Judge*, ver. 2. It was partly the atheistical behaviour and discourse of many Jews in that age, which moved God to give them this prophesy. “ We are not so wicked, said they to the prophet who reprov'd them, as you make us ; or, there are others more wicked than we, that prosper ; and why may not we ? If God disliked their ways, he certainly would not bear with them ; or, *where is the God of judgment ?* ” “ Well then,” replies God, “ you shall know experimentally where he is, and find him where you least look for him. By *Him whom you seek,—whom you delight in*, will I appear to be a *God of judgment* : and, that you may not be surpris'd at his coming, *Behold, I send my messenger,*” &c. He is the same person, as Eben Ezra observes, who, from the dignity of his person, is called the LORD, and from his office, *Angel of the covenant*. His office relates to a *covenant* with his people, which, as it seems by the punishment which followed his coming, they should reject. The time of his coming is said to be *suddenly*, that is, after the messenger, who was to prepare his way ; and is implied to be under that temple which they despis'd and profan'd, but of which he shall be the *glory*.

The question now is, Who is intended by the *first messenger* ? and again, Who by the LORD,—the *messenger of the covenant* ? You need only turn to chap. iv. 5, 6. to be sure that the first messenger is the same that is there called *Elias*. In the one place we read, *My messenger shall prepare the way before me* ; in the other it is declared how he shall prepare it ; viz. *by turning the hearts of the fathers, &c.* In the one place the day of his coming is described as very dreadful ; *But who may abide ? &c.* In the other, it is expressly nam'd so, and with reference to what went before : *that great and dreadful day of the Lord !* in both for the same reason ;—because of the terrible judgment which ensued.

The Jews in St. Jerome's time interpreted the first messenger of *Elias* ; and so did the Jews much earlier, who compos'd their liturgy : in the prayer at the bringing forth the book of the law, they say, “ O God, animate and strengthen us, and send to us the *angel* (or messenger), the redeemer. Let *Elias thy prophet* surely come in our days, with *Messiah the son of David thy servant*.” He is called *Elias the prophet*, chap. iv. but nowhere *God's prophet*, except in the passage before us, where God saith, *I will send my messenger, &c.* Knowing the *first messenger*, we cannot be in doubt about the *second*, since the coming of *Elias* and of the Lord *Messiah* are ever joined together by the Jews ; the one presupposes and infers the other. You read in the prayer just quoted, “ Send to us the *angel* (or messenger), the redeemer.” This is *Malachi's Angel of the covenant*. Again, “ Let *Elias thy prophet* surely come in our days, with the *Messiah,*” &c. This is the LORD in *Malachi*, who shall *suddenly come* after the messenger, his forerunner. *Kimchi*, *Abarbanel*, and other of the ancient Rabbis, unanimously agree that the Hebrew word אדון *adon*, or, *Lord*, means the “ *Messiah the son of David.*” St. Jerome says they referred it to their *πλειμμενος*, their *Anointed*, or *Christ*, which is the word that *Aquila* and *Symmachus* used for the *Messiah* : and indeed it is not possible to find any other person to whom the words in question will apply. What man besides was ever *expected* and *sought*, and *delighted in*, so long before they knew him ? What man else was ever called the LORD, and the *Lord of the temple*, but he, *whom David in spirit called My LORD*, because of God's associating him as Man into dominion with himself, *to sit at his right hand, till he made his enemies his footstool* ? What other deliverance was looked for by the Jews, as the deliverance of God himself, than that by the *Messiah* ? There is one certain deliverance promised them in a succession of prophets, by the terms of *salvation by the Lord*,—by the *Lord God himself*, as superior to, and different from, their former deliverances by flesh and blood ; and this the Jews appropriate to the redemption by the *Messiah*. God saves, and God judges by *him* : and he is, therefore, in *Malachi*, termed the *Lord*, as being *Emmanuel*, the *God, the Saviour with us*. In a word, who but one of his dignity ever had in Scripture a forerunner appointed him, that was predicted to give notice of, and prepare for, his coming ? Who, but the *Angel of the covenant*, was likely to transact the *new covenant*, which God assur'd them he would make with them in the latter days, and, as they understood, by the *Messiah* ? St. Mark, therefore, with good reason, introduces his Gospel with this unexceptionable text of *Malachi*, in order to shew the connection between the Old and New Testament ; and that one began where the other ended. *Malachi* was the last prophet whom God vouchsafed to the Jews before the coming of *Elias* ; and he, supposing the belief of a *Messiah* to come to be already received, and borrowing the expressions of the former prophets,—wherever *Malachi* speaks clearly of the *Messiah*, he may be justly thought to direct how we should understand those prophecies

and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

4 Then shall the offering of Judah and

Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in former years.

5 And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the

prophecies before him, of the Messiah. Thus when he says, *The Lord whom ye seek*, &c. he plainly intimates, that in his days the Jews expected and wished for that coming; even before the assurance that he now gave them. They had certainly some grounds for such pleasing hopes; for no one desires or delights in things unknown, undescribed, unpromised: and, the event depending merely on the will of God, nothing less than God's revelation was sufficient foundation for believing it; which revelation God was wont to communicate to their nation by the prophets. The writings of the prophets were in their hands; and they read therein many gracious promises of great good under some king of the house of David, repeated frequently before and after the captivity. On these promises they built their hopes; and as their affairs became low or intricate, the more their longings for these happy times increased. In such a situation Malachi found them at the time he prophesied. But, did he tell them that they were mistaken in their expectations? On the contrary, he assures them, that the Lord whom they expected shall come, &c. He could not have established the belief of a Messiah better, if he had cited the very texts from which they expected him. Yet some of these texts he refers to in this prophecy; for the words spoken of Christ's harbinger, *He shall prepare the way before me*, being taken from *Isai. xl. 1—3.* we have Malachi's testimony that *Isaiah* prophesied of the same person as he does. *Isaiah* begins his prophecy thus, *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people*, &c. Something very extraordinary appears to be here promised. The Jewish Targum tells us what it is, ver. 9. *Behold, the kingdom of your God is revealed*; meaning the kingdom of the Messiah; which, because the God of heaven shall set it up, is called the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of heaven. Hence the Jews learned to call the days of the Messiah the days of consolation; and waiting for the consolation of Israel is explained by seeing the Lord's Christ, or Messiah, *Luke, ii. 25, 26.* and by looking for redemption, and waiting for the kingdom of God. Hence one of the names of the Messiah is מְנַחֵם *Menachem*, or Comforter: and his salvation, *Isai. lxiii. 1.* is interpreted by the consolation of Israel, in the Chaldee. Since, therefore, *Isaiah*, under the figure of a voice proclaiming the approach of a greater person, prophecies of the coming of a certain messenger, to remove all hindrances out of his way, who is called the glory of the Lord, and their God; and since Malachi, predicting the coming of the same messenger, recites the very words of *Isaiah*, that he should prepare the way before him; and then applies the title of LORD to him whom they sought and delighted in; that is to say, to the Messiah;—we cannot avoid thinking that the same persons are intended in both the prophecies. It may be collected from this text, that angel or messenger is one of the titles of the Messiah. Malachi's fixing the character of messenger of the covenant on the Messiah authorises us to look for the accomplish-

ment of those prophecies which speak of another covenant in the days of the Messiah. God signified by his prophets successively, that he would make a new covenant, a covenant of peace; an everlasting covenant: that he would give his servant, his elect, to be a covenant to the people, and a light to the Gentiles. To what time or person these prophecies did relate, might be disputed before Malachi prophesied, though they have internal marks which point to the Messiah. But after Malachi had said so plainly, that the Lord whom they sought, meaning the Messiah, is the Messenger of the covenant whom they delight in, and that he shall surely come, we can no longer doubt it. It is saying in other words, the Messiah shall be the declarer, the publisher, the mediator of that better covenant,—for all these ideas are comprehended in the word messenger,—as Moses was of the old covenant; and that a law should be given by him. See Bishop Chandler's Defence, p. 52, &c.

Ver. 2. But who may abide the day, &c.] Though the Jews promised themselves great felicity from the coming of the Messiah, yet he was to be considered by them in the character of a severe and just judge: for, however they delighted themselves with the hopes of his coming, the prophet declares that it should eventually prove no matter of joy to them; for the day of his coming should be a day of exact retribution; when he appears, he shall be like a refiner's fire, and as fuller's soap; he shall separate the metal from the dross, and punish the impenitent with impartiality; and then they should be able to answer their old question mentioned in the former chapter, ver. 17. *Where is the God of judgment?* The divine judgments are often called a fiery trial, such as separates the genuine metal from the dross, purifies the former, and consumes the latter. The word בֹּרֵית *boreth*, translated soap, was, according to St. Jerome, the name of an herb growing in Palestine, and used by the fullers. This passage may be understood of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, or of John the Baptist, who reproved with the greatest freedom and force the sins of the people. See Bishop Chandler, p. 53. Calmet, and *Jer. ii. 22.*

Ver. 3. And he shall purify the sons of Levi] Not all of them; for the similitude is taken from gold and silver; which being purified, there remains some dross behind. So it happened after the ministration of the Lord Jesus Christ; a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith, *Acts, vi. 7.* Of the other sons of Levi, who did not believe in Christ, but wilfully rejected him, it is just before said, *Who may abide the day of his coming*, when, the metal being purified, he will cast the dross into the fire. See Houbigant.

Ver. 5. And I will be a swift witness against the forcerers.] God tells them, that he will hasten the day of his vengeance, and that it shall come speedily upon those whose sins are become epidemical; and if they refuse to repent on the preaching of the Gospel, he will proceed to destroy the nation

forerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in *his* wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger *from his right*, and fear not me, saith the LORD of Hosts.

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

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

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

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

10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD

of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that *there shall* not be room enough to receive it.

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

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

13 ¶ Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD: yet ye say, What have we spoken *so much* against thee?

14 Ye have said, It *is* vain to serve God: and what profit *is it* that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of Hosts?

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

16 ¶ Then they that feared the LORD

nation utterly. This may also farther refer to the second coming of our Lord to judge both quick and dead. See Lowth and Calmet.

Ver. 6. For I *am* the Lord, I change not] “Because I am “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and am true “to the promises given to your fathers, therefore you still “continue a people, and are not consumed as your iniquities deserve.” See Lowth and Calmet.

Ver. 8. Will a man rob God?] “Pretend what you will “to the reverence and fear of God, if you take away “what is consecrated, according to the law of Moses, to “the service of God and his temple, you do no better “than rob God himself.”

Ver. 9. Ye *are* cursed with a curse] Ye have been under a curse through want, because, &c. Houbigant.

Ver. 11. The dev.urer] The moth. Houbigant. Any of those insects are meant which consume and destroy the corn.

Ver. 16—18. Then they that feared the Lord] Houbigant remarks, that by the word *jewels* in ver. 17. are meant those who feared God, and embraced the faith of the Gospel. This, says he, is principally to be understood of those Jerusalem Christians who retreated to Pella, when the destruction of Jerusalem drew nigh. But Mr. Peters, I think, justly observes, that the last verse fixes the time to the resurrection, and the general judgment; when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, and when alone it will be possible for us to discern who are righteous, and who are wicked, by the divine distributions towards them; when every man shall receive his final lot, either of reward or punishment; and then shall we know with certainty, both who are, and what is to be God's סגולת *segullab*, his

jewels or *treasure*, for so the word signifies; something highly valuable. See his Dissert. on Job, p. 316. The words may be read, *And they shall be to me, saith the Lord of Hosts, in the day that I shall appoint, a peculiar treasure.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, If the words of the conclusion of the foregoing chapter be considered, as they are by some commentators, as the scoff of the infidel, who, because the Messiah's appearing was long delayed, concluded that he would never come, the opening of this chapter contains a full answer to such a suggestion. See the Critical Notes.

1. The harbinger of the Messiah approaches. *Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me.* Of whom this is spoken we cannot be in doubt (see Matt. xi. 10. Mark, i. 2.), John the Baptist being sent to point out the Lamb of God, and, by preaching repentance, to lead the people to him who alone can give remission of sins.

2. The Lord of life and glory shall immediately follow his herald and forerunner. *The Lord, whom ye seek*, the long-expected Messiah, to whom the eyes of Israel were directed, *shall suddenly come to his temple*, and by his presence fulfil the prophecy of Haggai, putting the most distinguished honour on that holy place,—*even the messenger of the covenant* of grace, who, as the great prophet sent from God, publishes and explains the tenor of that covenant more clearly and distinctly than it was ever done before; *whom ye delight in*: they in general pleased themselves with the expectation of him, though they entirely mistook the nature of his office; but many there were also among them, who waited for him as a spiritual Messiah, coming to

spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that

feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.

17 And they shall be mine, saith the LORD

to save his people from their sins. *He shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts, whose promise is faithful, and the accomplishment of it, in the fulness of time, sure.*

3; The great end of his coming is declared. Many wished for his appearing, who little understood the design of it; therefore is the question asked, *But who may abide the day of his coming?* who will be able to bear the doctrines that he advances, concerning his own Deity, the purpose of his coming to die for sinners, the nature of his kingdom, &c. or his sharp and piercing rebukes against the characters of the men of that generation, held in highest admiration; *and who shall stand when he appeareth?* before the piercing energy of his word; which intimates how few would endure or receive the truths that he taught while he abode upon earth; *for he is like a refiner's fire*; by his word separating the precious from the vile; distinguishing the true sense of God's word from the adulterating glosses of the scribes; and purifying his believing followers who received him; while the wicked, who rejected him, are cast away as dross: *and like fuller's soap*, which cleanses the garment from spots, so shall he cleanse his believing people from their sins.

Many shall be happy partakers of his grace, willingly receiving him with penitent hearts. On them *he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver*; by the various methods that he uses, he will purge away the dross of guilt and corruption from their souls; making every means of grace effectual, and every providence sanctified. When he puts those who thus believingly cleave to him into any furnace of affliction or temptation, he himself will regulate the fire, and take care that they shall be in it no longer, nor feel it fiercer, than they are able to bear; and the whole shall ultimately be for their good. *And he shall purify the sons of Levi*; not merely those Jews who were of that family, or the apostles and ministers of the gospel; but all his people, who are, through faith in him, consecrated to be priests unto God; *and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness, even themselves a living sacrifice, and the well-pleasing oblation of prayer and praise, and all their works and labours of love, accepted now in Jesus Christ. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years*; like the offering of Abel, the sacrifice of Abraham, or the burnt-offering of Aaron, which the heavenly fire devoured. Justified through the infinite merit of Christ's sacrifice, and sanctified by the Spirit of Jesus, all the services of his people shall be a sweet-smelling savour.

To some for judgment he will come into the world, a favour of death unto them through their wilful impenitence, as of life unto others. Their characters are declared: they are *forerowers*, who used enchantments and divination; *adulterers*, wallowing in the lusts of uncleanness; *false swearers*, who profaned God's name, and called him to witness to a lie; *oppressors of the hireling*, defrauding him of his wages; *of the widow and fatherless*, taking

advantage of their helplessness to plunder and devour them; *and turn aside the stranger from his right*; because ignorant of the law, or through the partiality of the judges; *and they fear not me, saith the Lord of Hosts, nor obey his Gospel*. For all which things Christ threatens to be a swift witness against them, and will bring their sins to light, however secretly committed; and execute just judgment in consequence upon them, and that quickly; as he did, shortly after his appearing in the flesh, in the destruction of Jerusalem; and as he will do in the great day of perdition of all the ungodly.

4. He ratifies the determined purposes of his word. *I am the Lord, Jehovah, self-existent, self-sufficient, able to save or destroy to the uttermost. I change not*; I am love itself towards every returning penitent, and in me is fulness of grace for every genuine believer; *therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed*; I still wait to receive you, if ye will turn and live: but if ye will not return, ye have only yourselves to blame: still *I change not*; but my decrees of judgment against the finally impenitent shall stand for ever.

2dly, We have,

1. The charge, drawn up against the Jewish people, of long-continued iniquities. From *the days of their fathers* the apostacy began; they had forsaken *God's ordinances*, and had *not kept them*; yet he, patient and gracious, invited them to return, with the kindest assurances of forgiveness and acceptance. *Return unto me, and I will return unto you*; but they, instead of obeying, in the pride and stubbornness of their hearts, replied, *Wherein shall we return?* as if they had done nothing amiss, and needed no repentance; or were displeased at the gracious invitation, because it implied a rebuke. God therefore lays their crimes to their conscience: *Will a man rob God? or the gods? even a heathen would not act thus toward his idols: or the judges*; none could think with impunity thus to treat a magistrate; how daring the attempt then, and how insolent the provocation, to rob God of his honour, glory, and service, as they had done; *yet ye have robbed me. Note*; Robbers of God are the worst of robbers: all these persist in maintaining their innocence, and impudently challenge him to prove the accusation: *Wherein have we robbed thee?* The proof is evident; *in tithes and offerings*: they robbed God's altar of its due, and his ministers of their maintenance; making no conscience of defrauding them of their appointed portion, or giving them the worst, when the best should have been brought; as if the blind and lame were good enough for an offering. This was the sin of *the whole nation*, and the universality of the crime was an aggravation of it; therefore *ye are cursed with a curse*; with barrenness, want, and locusts, which devoured their labours. So little is got by robbing God; for they who think that they shall grow the richer by their fraudulent dealings with God's ministers, will find the curse of God, like a canker-worm, devouring their substance.

2. They are warned to amend their ways: and the

of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

18 Then shall ye return, and discern be-

tween the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

gracious invitation still abides the same; *Return unto me, and I will return unto you*: and they would find themselves abundant gainers by rendering to him his due; *bring ye all the tithes into the store-house; all, conscientiously scrupulous that nothing in quantity or quality be kept back; that there may be meat in mine house*; for God's altar* should be served before our own tables, and the support of his worship and service should be dearer to us, than any secular concerns more immediately our own; and such honesty will be found the best policy, as it will procure God's blessing. *And prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if they should not find abundantly their advantage in so doing.* They who dare trust God will be convinced by experience, that their dues and benefactions for the support of a Gospel-ministry, and their charity to the poor, shall never impoverish but enrich them. *Prove me, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, which had been shut up; and send the needful refreshing rains, and pour you out a blessing, abundant fruitfulness, and plenty of all good things; so that ye shall not be sufficient; there shall be more than there are hands to reap and gather, barns to fill, or vessels to receive: and I will rebuke the devourer for your sake; the locust and caterpillar shall no more destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall the vine, through drought, blasting, or hurricanes, cast her fruit before the time in the field.* *And all nations, who before reproached them with their want and poverty, shall call you blessed, beholding the evident care and kindness of God towards them; for ye shall be a delightful land, saith the Lord of Hosts; where plenty reigns, and over which God continually watches with his peculiar love and favour; and these indeed make the truly delightful land.*

3d'y, The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. He observes the characters of men, and they will be punished or rewarded accordingly.

1. He observed among the Jews some who, with daring insolence, arraigned the dispensations of his providence and grace, and revolted from his worship and ordinances. *Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord: yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee? as if they had been clear from blame: or if an inadvertent word had dropped from them, it was not a matter that deserved such sharp admonition.* So ready are sinners to extenuate their faults; and because they have no sense of the evil of sin themselves, they think God severe in his rebukes: yet surely they had provoked him most highly. *Ye have said, It is vain to serve God, since there is nothing to be got by his service; but the wicked often fare better than the righteous; and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, exact in the observation of his worship and cere-*

monies, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts, in the habit of penitents. Perhaps reference is here had to the Sadducees, who denied a future state, and the Pharisees, who, rigidly scrupulous in the form of godliness, observed it merely for worldly ends, and looked upon it as a burthensome task. But their evil report will be confuted by the experience of every gracious person, who will find God's ways both pleasant and profitable; and count God's service perfect freedom, and its own reward. *And now we call the proud happy; they judged of happiness by outward wealth and splendour, and because they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are delivered, for such they beheld who prospered in iniquity; and though their presumptuous sins seemed to cry for vengeance, no evil came upon them; therefore they were ready to conclude, that there was neither a providence here, nor a judgment to come; and that those were the happiest who gratified every desire of the flesh and of the mind.* And these were the hard speeches that God heard, which he will confute and confound when the wrath, which pursues the most prosperous sinner, shall quickly overtake him.

2. He heard with pleasure the gracious conversation of the few faithful ones, who feared and served him. We have,

[1.] Their character. (1.) *They feared the Lord, revered his authority, submitted to his providential will without murmuring, were jealous of offending, and kept themselves with constancy in his holy worship and ways.* (2.) *They thought upon his name; remembering him, his word, his promises; and meditated thereon, supporting their faith in these trying days with the consideration of his adorable perfections, and maintaining still their communion with him.* (3.) *They spoke often one to another; the more iniquity abounded, the more they stirred each other up to love and to good works: whilst others spake so much against God, they made bold profession of his religion, and encouraged each other with zeal to appear in his cause: when their neighbours had renounced all religious worship and conversation, they assembled to talk of God's goodness, and to unite in prayer and praise at a throne of grace. May we, who live in these ungodly days, be enabled to go and do likewise!*

[2.] The honour that God put upon them. (1.) *The Lord hearkened and heard it; was present in their private assemblies; and where two or three met together for these gracious purposes, he was in the midst of them, testifying his approbation of their conduct, by the comfort, strength, and encouragement that he bestowed upon them.* (2.) *A book of remembrance was written before him; he entered every gracious word into his sacred records,—treasured them up in his all-comprehensive mind,—laid them up for the comfort of the faithful unto the great day, when they shall come into remembrance, and be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.* (3.) *They shall be mine, saith the Lord*

* In these Reflections, I have applied the prophet's words to the Christian dispensation; but the reader is requested to make all due allowances for the dissimilarity of circumstances.

C H A P. IV.

God's judgment on the wicked, and his blessing on the good: he exhorteth to the study of the law, and telleth of Elijah's coming and office.

[Before Christ about 400.]

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

2 ¶ But unto you that fear my name shall

the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

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

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

5 ¶ Behold, I will send you Elijah the

Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels, delivered from the flames of Jerusalem, in which the others fell; or in general this is spoken of all God's faithful saints, who are jewels dear and precious to him, glittering with divine graces, and intended to deck the crown of the eternal King; they are mine, saith God; he has a peculiar property in his believing people, and regards them as a man does his own things, with especial affection. The day referred to is that of the appearing of the great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who shall separate the precious and the vile: and when the wicked are made as the dung, the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father: he will make them up, collecting them together into his glorious treasury in heaven, and there shall they be ever with the Lord. (4.) I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him; loving God, and walking with him, they shall continually experience from him a father's love: since they shew themselves in spirit and temper his dutiful children, he will overlook their infirmities, will forgive their offences; tenderness shall soften all his rebukes, whilst every feeble effort to please him, though but like the liftings of a child, shall be accepted. (5.) He will put such a distinguishing difference between them and others, that all shall take knowledge of them, and own that they are the blessed of the Lord. Then shall ye, who have spoken so stoutly against the Lord, and the unprofitableness of his service, return; shall change your sentiments and language, and shall discern, by the sequel, the difference which God makes between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not; and this was evident at the destruction of Jerusalem, out of which the people of God had escaped before the siege; and shall be abundantly manifest in the judgment-day. The real characters of men are now difficult to be discerned; the veil of hypocrisy, our prejudices, and the weakness of our understandings, make us often mistake, and count them gracious whom God will disown, and those vile who are beloved of him: but every man's true state will then appear: the righteous in Christ Jesus, through his blood and Spirit, who have loved and served him faithfully, will then be without spot before the throne of God, and go with him into eternal glory; while the wicked, who lived in impenitence or hypocrisy, shall be seen and abhorred of

all, and go away into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Reader, *Judge nothing before the time concerning the characters of others, or at least judge mercifully; but judge thyself, that thou mayest not be judged of the Lord.*

C H A P. IV.

Ver. 1. Behold, the day cometh] This is a continuation of the discourse in the preceding chapter; and would be more properly joined to it, than made the beginning of a new chapter.

Ver. 2. The Sun of righteousness] The Lord Jesus Christ; consequently, the day, of which it is said in the preceding verse that it shall burn as an oven, is not the day of the last judgment, but of the destruction of the Jews, which immediately followed the coming of the Sun of righteousness. Houbigant; who renders the last clause, *And ye shall leap as calves going out of their stall.*

Ver. 3. Ye shall tread down the wicked] This seems to refer to the miracles of the rising church; by which the wicked, through divine grace, yielded and submitted themselves; for there could be no other way employed for their subjugation to the Gospel by Christians as such. See Houbigant.

Ver. 4. Remember ye the law of Moses] "Because your republic can no otherwise subsist, till the Sun of righteousness shall arise, than by your observance of the law of Moses, especially as you are to have no prophets till the forerunner of the Messiah."

Ver. 5, 6. Behold, I will send you Elijah, &c.] This prophecy, says Bishop Chandler, is a repetition of that in chap. iii. 1. only the name of the messenger is added to it, with the manner of his preparing the way, which is declared to be spiritual: *he shall turn the hearts of the fathers with the children; and of the children with the fathers* (as Kimchi properly renders the particle *וְיָאֵל*); that is to say, he shall do his part to cause a national reformation to convert fathers and children all together from their evil practices, and restore a true sense of religion; which was then dwindled into form, and so remove the curse, the utter excision denounced upon this land, namely Judæa; *lest I come, and smite the land with a curse.* The coming of the day of the Lord, and Jehovah's coming to smite the land with a curse, is the coming of the Lord, Messiah; which should prove a

4 S terrible

prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD :

6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers

to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

terrible time to the wicked Jews, though to the godly he should arise as the Sun of righteousness. It was the universal opinion when Christ was upon earth, received by the learned and unlearned, the governors and the people at large, that Elijah should usher in the Messiah, and anoint him : all expected that Elijah should first come, and restore all things ; and long before that, the son of Sirach grounded it on the passage now before us. Thus he speaks to the true Elijah : *Thou wast ordained for reproof,*—(thou wast written of as a type) *in after-times to pacify the wrath of the Lord's judgment, before it break into fury, and to turn the heart of the father unto the son, and to restore the tribes of Jacob ;* which is part of the Messiah's office, *Isai. xlix. 6.* The Jews have not since varied from this notion : in all their later prophets the coming of Elijah and of the Messiah are usually mentioned together ; and this is the reason why they pray so heartily for the coming of Elijah, even without mention of the Messiah ; because the coming of the one, according to Malachi, infers the other. But it is neither said nor implied in the text, that Elijah the Tishbite should come in person : if any one else came in the spirit and power of Elijah, Malachi's words were fulfilled ; who meant no more that Elijah should rise again, than Hosea and Jeremiah did that David should be restored to life, in order to reign over Israel and Judah, when they prophesied that the tribes should *hereafter serve David their king.* It is common with them to describe persons by the names of others whom they resemble in the most eminent qualities. And as it is not said, so it could not be intended, here, that Elijah should come again in person. Whoever he was, he must precede the final destruction of the Jews, which has been over 1700 years ago, and no real Elijah come to warn them of it, as is confessed by them. But, take the words as they are interpreted by the very learned Grotius, and the sense is easy, and the completion manifest. "After me you shall have no prophet for a long time : the next shall be the harbinger of the Messiah, in whom prophecy shall revive. He shall be another Elijah for zeal, for courage, austerity of life, and labour for reformation." The fact is allowed by the Jews, that prophecy was sealed up with Malachi, and to be restored in the days of the Messiah. Had they been able to receive it, they would have concluded that John the Baptist, in whom this gift did revive, must be therefore the Elijah of Malachi : for all the people held John as a prophet, *Matth. xiv. 5. xxi. 26.* The Sanhedrim, astonished at his preaching and actions, thought that he must be *Elijah ; that prophet in Moses, or the Messiah :* and many of the scribes and pharisees, as well as the rest of the country, *went to be baptized of him, confessing their sins ;* *John, i. 19. 25. Matth. iii. 5—7.* His preaching exactly answered the description of it by Malachi. As Elijah was to notify the coming of the day that shall burn, &c. *ver. 1.* that great and dreadful day, wherein the Lord, Messiah, shall smite the land of Jewry with a curse ; so did John the Baptist exhort to repentance from this motive, that the kingdom of God was at hand ; and

to flee from the wrath to come, for there was one to come after him, mightier than he, whose fan was in his hand, to purge the floor, and to burn the chaff with unquenchable fire ; *Matth. iii. 2. 7. 10, 11.* Josephus confirms the account given of him in the sacred historians : "It was the opinion of the Jews," says he, "that Herod's army was cut off by the Arabs, through God's just judgment, for the sake of John, who was surnamed the Baptist. For he killed that excellent man, who stirred up the people to the exercise of all virtues, especially piety and justice, and to receive his baptism, which he assured them was grateful to God, if to purity of body they added purity of life, and first cleansed their souls, not from one or two, but every sin. But when the people resorted in numbers to him, greedy of his doctrine, and ready to do any thing by his counsel, fearing what might be effected from so great authority of the man, he imprisoned and then slew him." *Antiq. lib. xviii. cap. 7.* If there were nothing else for it, the fulfilling of his predictions demonstrated John to be a true prophet : for, as John had foretold, Jesus suddenly after him appeared in the temple, preaching likewise repentance for remission of sins, and warning the Jews of the impending desolation of their country ; which he executed accordingly, as he threatened he would, within a few years after they put him to death, and rejected his doctrine. No such events fell out at any time before ; and these at this time came up to the words of the prophecy. The events, therefore, are another proof of the sense of the prophecy. The coming of John the Baptist as a prophet, and of Jesus as the Messiah, and the final destruction of Judæa following their coming, according to their preaching, is a plain evidence, that they only were intended in the present prophecy. See Bishop Chandler's Defence, p. 64, &c. We shall have occasion to speak more on this subject when we come to the history of John the Baptist in the Evangelists ; and in the meantime have great pleasure in recommending the reader to the very ingenious Dr. Bell's "Inquiry into the Divine Missions of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ."

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The coming of Christ, spoken of in this chapter, for the destruction of Jerusalem and the wicked Jews, is the type and figure of his appearing at the last for the perdition of the ungodly ; and the day of their final judgment will be the day of final recompence for the faithful saints of God.

1. The Lord Jesus will be a consuming fire to the wicked. Behold, with surprize and terror, the day cometh, the evil day, which the transgressor put far away, that shall burn as an oven ; when the wrath of God shall be revealed, and the fire be kindled around the devoted city ; and all the proud, the scribes and pharisees who rejected the Lord Jesus ; and all that do wickedly, the apostate Jewish people ; shall be as stubble to the devouring flames ; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch ; the whole nation being destroyed, and

and the city and temple burnt and razed to their foundations.

Thus in the great day of the wrath of the Lamb, he shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on *the proud*, the self-righteous, and unhumiliated sinner, who trusted for salvation on his own doings and duties; and *on all that do wickedly*, the careless and profane, who know not God and obey not his Gospel; they shall be all devoted to destruction, and fuel for the flames, and cast together into the everlasting burnings of hell, where their worm never dies, and their fire is not quenched.

2. He will be a reviving sun to his people. *Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings*; he led his people out of Jerusalem to Pella, when it was ready to be destroyed; and more generally on all his believing people he thus *arises*, when first they yield in faith to his gracious invitations, and he then calls them out of darkness into his marvellous light; he is their sun, the fountain of all spiritual light and life; by his bright beams they are quickened, bring forth fruit abundantly, rejoice before him, and walk in the light of truth, which leads the faithful soul to the mansions of glory. He is their *Sun of righteousness*, shining without spot himself, the author of everlasting righteousness to his faithful people, and the powerful and effectual agent, who by his mighty working transforms them into his own image of righteousness and true holiness: *in his wings*, his rays of light and grace, there is *healing*; our spiritual diseases are cured, the native darkness of the mind removed, and our sin-sick souls restored to health and strength by the genial influences of his reviving beams: and in the resurrection-morn with brighter lustre shall this glorious sun appear, and shine for ever upon his glorified saints.

3. In consequence of this, *ye shall go forth*, either out of Jerusalem to Pella, where the Christians found a place of refuge; or rather, the faithful shall go forth to walk in the light of the Lord, rejoicing in his salvation, steadily advancing in the path of grace, and running with delight the way of God's commandments; *and grow up as calves of the stall*, fat and well-liking; so replenished shall they be with the influences of God's spirit, and fed with the bread of life, strengthening and increasing with the increase of God. *And ye shall tread down the wicked*; for they shall be as *ashes under the soles of your feet*, in the day that I shall do this,

saith the Lord of Hosts: the wicked Jews who persecuted them shall now be burnt with their cities, and trod into the dust. Thus when the conquests of the Redeemer shall be completed, and death itself destroyed, then shall the wicked be brought low, and every foe that troubled God's saints be trodden under foot; while the triumphs of the glorified shall be everlasting. See the Notes.

2dly, The canon of the Old Testament now receives a solemn close. The Jewish people are to expect no more prophets till the great forerunner of the Messiah appears; and therefore,

1. They must keep steadfast to the law and the testimony, and be guided only by God's past revealed will. *Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments*, moral and ceremonial; all which would have a direct tendency to lead them to Christ; for which purpose the law was their schoolmaster, and it must now be their only rule, in contradistinction to the corrupt glosses which their teachers shortly after began to put upon it. *Note*; The word of God alone, exclusive of all traditions and human expositions, must be our rule; the labours of others may assist our inquiries after truth; but, after all, we must call no man master; one is our master, even Christ, and he has promised that we shall be taught of him; and by prayer and meditation on his word, humbly desiring to know his mind, he will lead us into all truth.

2. They must live in the constant expectation of the Messiah, and his forerunner John the Baptist. *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet*, one in the spirit and power of Elijah, Luke, i. 17. one in zeal, courage to rebuke sin, piety and austerity of manners resembling him, Matt. xi. 14. *before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord*, when, for the rejection of the true Messiah, wrath to the uttermost should be poured out upon their land, and their city and temple be utterly destroyed; Acts, ii. 20. *He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers*, or of the fathers with the children; both one and the other by his preaching shall be turned to Christ, and directed to the Lamb of God, who is come to take away the sin of the world; *lest I come and smite the earth with a curse*, which would be the certain consequence of their rejecting the Lord's Christ, and which visibly remains upon the Jewish people to this day.

TABLES of SCRIPTURE MEASURES, WEIGHTS, and COINS: with an APPENDIX, containing the Method of calculating its MEASURES of SURFACE, hitherto wanting in Treatises on this Subject. By the Right Reverend RICHARD Lord Bishop of PETERBOROUGH.

A MEASURE is a known quantity applied to another of the same kind that is less known, to make its dimensions better known, by help of numbers expressing the proportion that the known quantity bears to the unknown. The dimensions to be measured are three: 1. *Mere Length*, which hath but one dimension. 2. *Surface*, which consists of length multiplied into breadth; so it hath two dimensions, as it were interwoven; and this is always measured by some square surface already known, as by a square foot, or a square cubit, or any other square already known, by help of its side. Moses generally useth the square cubit. 3. *Solidity, or Capacity*, which hath three dimensions multiplied into each other: length, breadth, and height or depth. This is measured by a known cube. From solidity ariseth weight in all sublunary bodies; and by weight we measure the value of coins: therefore I shall join weights and coins together in the Fourth Table.

I use = to signify equal; :: to express proportion; ∠ is called separatrix, parting decimals from integers.

I. TABLE. *Measures of Length.*

I express the cubit, and its parts, both by inch-measure and by foot-measure; which I deduce from inches by this proportion:

Inch-Meas. Foot-Meas.
As 12. 1. :: 21 ∠ 888 = 1 ∠ 824.

	Inch. Decim.	Foot. Dec.
A cubit is = to	21 ∠ 888	= 1 ∠ 824.
A span the longer = ½ a cubit . . .	= 10 ∠ 944	= ∠ 912.
Span the less = ¼ of a cubit	= 7 ∠ 296	= ∠ 608.
A hand's breadth = ⅓ of a cubit . . .	= 3 ∠ 684	= ∠ 304.
A finger's breadth = ¼ of a cubit =	∠ 912	= ∠ 076.

Measures of many Cubits Length, I express only in Foot-Measure.

	Feet.	Decim.
A fathom is = 4 cubits	= 7	∠ 296.
Ezekiel's reed = 6 cubits	= 10	∠ 944.

Schænus, the Egyptian line for land-measure, which I think Scripture useth to divide inheritances, Psalm xvi. 6. and lxxviii. 55. They used different lengths, but the shortest and most useful was

Cubits
= 80 = 145 ∠ 92.

Herodotus mentions a *schænus* just 300 times as long: I judge that all the greater were made in proportion to the least. The mile, = 4000 cubits = 7296 Feet. Stadium, ⅓ of their mile . . = 400 Cubits . . = 729 ∠ 6 Parasang, 3 of their miles . . = 12000 Cubits = 4 English miles, and 580 feet.

II. TABLE. *Measures of Surface.*

Moses hath described these by square cubits. I here express them reduced to our square feet: the method of this reduction is taught in an Appendix. I first propose

three clear examples given by Moses. Secondly, I place six instances of greater difficulty.

The clearest Examples are,

I. The altar of Incense. Only two sides of it, viz. its length and breadth, are expressed by Moses; each of them is affirmed to be one cubit. Yet he declares that it was four-square: whence we collect that it was just one square cubit. See Exod. xxx. 2. Now it is demonstrated in the Appendix, that one Jewish square cubit amounts to in surface three English square feet, and about 47 square inches.

II. The table of shew-bread, Exod. xxv. 23. It is affirmed to be two cubits in length, and one in breadth. None doubt but it was rectangular, containing two Jewish square cubits. These amount to above six English square feet, and above half, viz. 94 square inches.

III. The boards of the tabernacle, each ten cubits in length, and one and a half in breadth, Exod. xxvi. 16. being rectangular, must contain 15 square cubits, Jewish. These are proved to contain very near 50 square feet of English measure.

The more difficult cases reserved to the Appendix, are,

I. The mercy-seat, whose surface is = 12 square feet and ½.

II. A general method is taught of reducing any given number of Jewish cubits to English square feet.

III. The example of the 15 square cubits in the boards of the tabernacle is made clearer.

IV. The court of the tabernacle, described Exod. xxvii. 18. is found to be just half the Egyptian *aroura*, and to contain 1 rood, 21 perches, 27 square feet, &c.

V. The whole *aroura* is determined, and reduced to our English measures, 3 roods, 2 perches, 55 square feet.

VI. The suburbs, or glebe-land, given to each city of the Levites, Numb. xxxv. 3, 4, 5. is shewed to be a square, on each of the four sides of every city, containing a million of Jewish square cubits, or 100 *aroura*; which amount to in each square 76 acres, 1 rood, 20 perches, 80 square feet: whence we collect, that all the four squares amounted to 305 acres, 2 roods, 1 perch, besides 51 feet square.

III. TABLE. *Measures of Capacity.*

	Wine Gall.	Pints.	Inch.	Sol.
<i>Epha</i> or <i>bath</i>	7	4	15	
<i>Chomer</i> , <i>komer</i> in our Translation	75	5	7	
<i>Seab</i> ⅓ of <i>epha</i>	2	4	3	
<i>Hin</i> = ⅓ of <i>epha</i>	1	2	1	
<i>Omer</i> ⅓ of <i>epha</i>	0	6	0 ∠ 5	
<i>Cab</i> ⅓ of <i>epha</i>	0	3	10	
<i>Log</i> ⅓ of <i>epha</i>	0	0 ½	10	
<i>Metretres</i> of Syria (Joh. ii. 6.) = <i>Cong. Rom.</i>	0	7 ½	0	
<i>Cotyla, eastern</i> , ⅓ of <i>epha</i>	0	0 ½	3	

This

This *cotyla* contains just 10 ounces *averdupois* of rain-water: *omer* 100: *epha* 1000: *chomer* 10,000. So by these weights all these measures of capacity may be expeditiously recovered to a very near exactness.

IV. TABLE. Of Weights and Coins.

The Jewish weights are reduced to the standard grains of our *Troy* weight; whereof 438 are equal to the Roman ounce, and to our ancient English *averdupois* ounce.

The value of Jewish and Roman weights and coins, at the present value of silver and gold, expressed in pence and decimals of a penny.

	Grains.	Dec.	Pence.	Decim.	s	d.	q.
<i>Shekel</i> is the original wt.	= 219	—	= 28	∠ 2875	= 2	4	1
<i>Bekah</i> $\frac{1}{2}$ a <i>shekel</i>	= 109	∠ 5	= 14	∠ 1437	= 1	2	$\frac{1}{2}$ x
<i>Gerah</i> $\frac{1}{16}$ of <i>bekah</i>	= 10	∠ 95	= 1	∠ 41437	= 0	1	$\frac{1}{4}$ x
<i>Maneh</i> = 100 <i>shekel</i> wt.	= 21900		Pence.	Dec.	l.	s.	d.
<i>Maneh</i> in coin = 60 <i>shil.</i>	= 13140	= 1697	∠ 25	= 7	1	5	
<i>Tal. sil.</i> = 3000 <i>shil.</i>	= 657000	= 84862	∠ 5	= 353	11	100	b
<i>Talent of gold</i> the same weight				= 5075	15	70	b
The golden <i>Darics</i> , <i>Ezra</i> , ii. 69. seem to be Coins of <i>Darius</i> the <i>Mede</i> . They weighed 12 <i>gerahs</i>				= 131	∠ 4		
						1	s. d.
							= 10 4

Roman Money mentioned in the New Testament.

	Pence.	Faithings.
<i>Denarius</i> , silver,	7	∴ 3
<i>Affis</i> , copper,	0	∴ 3
<i>Affarium</i> ,	0	∴ 1 $\frac{1}{2}$
<i>Quadrans</i> ,	0	∴ 0 $\frac{1}{2}$
<i>A Mite</i> ,	0	∴ 0 $\frac{1}{4}$

An APPENDIX to the Second Table of Measures of Surface, described by *Moses*, shewing the Method of reducing them by Calculation to the Measures used in England, for the Benefit of those that understand Decimal Arithmetic, and desire to try the Reduction given in the Table, or to make further Improvements in this Kind of Measures.

1. The *mercy-seat*. I SHALL begin with reduction of the measures of the *mercy-seat*, which was God's throne of grace among the Jews. *Moses* in *Exod.* xxv. 17. affirms, that its length was two cubits and an $\frac{1}{2}$, its breadth one cubit and an $\frac{1}{2}$. The fractions adhering to its length and breadth, make some difficulty to beginners in arithmetic, which the decimal way doth much abate. Supposing therefore, what I have elsewhere proved, that the Jewish cubit was in foot-measure, 1 ∠ 824, the length must be expressed in foot-measure, and decimals thereof, 4 ∠ 560. The breadth in like measure will be 2 ∠ 736. Wherefore the product of these numbers multiplied into each other, gives its surface 12 ∠ 47616: in number of its square feet, and decimals thereof, 12 square feet, and very near half a square foot; if the decimals had been ∠ 50, it had been just $\frac{1}{2}$ a foot. If we desire to express those decimals of a foot in square inches, as is usual in England, we must mul-

tiply ∠ 47616 by 144, the square inches of a foot, and the product will be 68 ∠ 56704: which shews that the decimals we found, amount to 68 square inches, and about $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch more: we need not be nicer.

2. A square cubit reduced to our measure. 2. In the altar of incense *Moses* describes the Jewish square cubit, which must be reduced to our foot-measure, thus $\frac{1}{16}$. The product of these numbers multiplied will be the upper surface of this altar, 3 ∠ 326976, that is three square feet and ∠ 326976 decimals of a square foot, which we may express by 47 square inches, and a few decimals of an inch square inconsiderable.

3. The boards of the tabernacle. 3. *Moses*'s description of the boards of the tabernacle, *Exod.* xxvi. 16. by ten cubits in length, and one and an $\frac{1}{2}$ in breadth, naturally leads a man to discern in each board's surface 15 Jewish square cubits; because if we conceive a line drawn from the end of one cubit at the bottom of the board, to the end of one cubit at the top of the board, this must needs be 10 whole square cubits on one side of that line, and 10 half square cubits (= 5 whole) on the other side of that line: here therefore are 15 square cubits. The reduction of these into English square feet is performed by multiplying 15, viz. the number of cubits given, into 3 ∠ 326976, the feet and decimals of one square cubit, and the product will be 49 ∠ 90464, and that is very near to 50 square feet; for those decimals amount to above 130 square inches, and little more than 13 square inches would make it just 50 feet, which abatement we need not here regard.

4. The court of the tabernacle. 4. Let us now go to the measure of the surface of land. But we will begin with the court of the tabernacle, the ground on which the priests performed all the solemn public worship of *Israel* in *Moses*'s time. The area of this court is described by *Moses*, *Exod.* xxvii. 18. by its length 100 cubits, and its breadth every where 50 cubits. Wherefore this area must be in Jewish measure 5000 square cubits, for that is the product of 100 multiplied into 50. To reduce these 5000 Jewish cubits into English square feet, I must multiply 5000 into 3 ∠ 326976; the product is 16634 ∠ 88 English square feet.

But in cases of such long numbers of feet, we use for brevity's sake, and to help our memories, to reduce them into perches, or roods, or acres, which contain known numbers of square feet. A perch contains 272 square feet, and $\frac{1}{4}$. A rood is = to 10890 square feet. An acre is = to 43560 square feet. It is plain that the number 16634 ∠ 88, hath not integers equal to those of an acre; but it hath enough to answer those in a rood and some overplus; therefore I must divide 16634 ∠ 88 by 10890, which is a rood. By such division continued in the decimal way, until I have a fraction of five or six places, which is exact enough, I find the quote to be 1 ∠ 527537, which assures me that my number 16634 ∠ 88, hath but once intirely in it a whole rood: but it hath moreover in it many decimal parts of a rood. These, therefore, I reduce to the perches contained in them, by multiplying them into 40, which is the number of perches that make up a rood; and, cutting off six places from the product, which is 21 ∠ 101480; so I find there are 21 perches intire, and the figure, after the separatrix are

decimals of a perch. These also I multiply by $272\angle 25$, which are the square feet and decimals of a perch. The product of this last multiplication, after eight places cut off from it by the separatrix, because there were six places of decimals in one of the multipliers, and two in the other, is $27\angle 62793000$. Hence I learn that there are therein but 27 intire feet, all the eight decimal places amount to little above $\frac{1}{2}$ a foot, and therefore I cast them away as inconsiderable in the measure of land. This method of reduction by multiplication of decimals, I find to be easier than the common way of reduction by division, and therefore I propose it to be used by beginners in this practice of surveying. So I find this court to contain in English measure 1 rood, 21 perches, 27 feet, and little more than half a foot squared. But, reflecting upon Moses's measure by cubits, and finding them to be precisely 5000 square cubits, I observed that they were just half 10,000, which I had observed from Herodotus's *Enterpe* to be the area of the Egyptian *Aroura*, by which their land was generally measured as ours is by acres and roods. See Herodot. l. ii. c. 168.; I called also to mind a passage in Manetho, an Egyptian priest, cited by Josephus in his first book against Apion, where he affirms that Manetho, in his History of the Reign, Wars, and Expulsion of the Pastors, (whom Africanus affirms to be Phœnicians or Canaanites, and Josephus vainly believed to be Jews,) wrote out of the public records of Egypt, that these Pastors made at Abaris a very large and strong encampment, that encompassed 10,000 *aroura*, sufficient to contain 240,000 men, and long to maintain their cattle. Hence it appears, that not only the Egyptians, but the Phœnicians or Canaanites also that had dwelt among them, and had reigned there during the time of six kings successively, used this measure of land, called *aroura*. Now this was long before Moses's time; for the beginning of Amosis or Tethmosis, who expelled them out of Egypt, was very near the time of Abraham's death, as appears by the Annals of the learned Primate of Ireland. Wherefore I believe that Moses, who was skilled in all Egyptian learning, especially surveying, did of choice make the court of the tabernacle to be just half an *aroura*, which was a known measure to him and his people, who had long dwelt in Egypt, and divine authority directed him so to do.

5. *The reduction of an aroura to English measures.* Because we have shewn from Herodotus, that an *aroura* is the square of 100 Jewish or Egyptian cubits, and 100 such cubits may, in English foot-measure, be expressed by $182\angle 4$ English feet, it follows that the square of this number will express exactly the number of the English square feet that are contained in an *aroura*. Now by multiplication of $182\angle 4$ into itself, I find the product to be $33269\angle 76$: therefore I conclude, that there are 33269 square feet intire, and $\angle 76$ decimals of a square foot in an *aroura*. Now to reduce these English square feet into roods, perches, and the remainder of square feet, I use the method used in the last paragraph: first, I divide them by 10890, the square feet in a rood, and the quote I find $3\angle 055074$, that is, three roods, and $\angle 055074$ decimals of a rood. Secondly, I multiply those decimals by 40, which is the number of perches in a rood; the product is $2\angle 202960$. Hence I conclude there are therein two perches, and $\angle 202960$ deci-

imals of a perch. Thirdly, I multiply these last decimals by $272\angle 25$, which are the square feet of a perch. The product is $55\angle 25586000$, that is 55 intire square feet; the eight places of decimals amount to little above $\frac{1}{4}$ of a square foot, therefore I reject them as inconsiderable in measure of land. By all these reductions it is found that an *aroura* is, in English measure, three roods, two perches, $55\frac{1}{4}$ square feet. Hence it follows also that it is not well translated by *jugerum*, for it is much larger, nor is it well in English called an acre, for it is considerably less. To this place I refer the use of the lesser sort of $\sigma\chi\omicron\upsilon\nu\textcircled{G}$, which yet is most convenient for the use of the Egyptians and of the Jews to measure out private men's inheritances, by a line which was 80 cubits long. For the length of this line will measure one side of an *aroura*, if the other side be 125 cubits long, which is the length of this line and its half, and five cubits above half of it, which they might easily mark in it by a knot or a ring. And by this means they might easily lay any number of *aroura* together, all of them rectangular and parallel to each other. Such lines I suppose for measure of inheritances are intimated, Psal. lxxviii. 55. and xvi. 6, &c.

6. *The Levites' glebe.* I shall conclude with an example amounting, after reduction, to a number of English acres, which measure we have not yet reached to. This I take from Numb. xxxv. 3, 4, 5. verses: there Moses describes what measure of land the Levites were to be allowed for their cattle, their goods, and all their beasts, on the north, east, south, and west sides of each of their cities. So that the city was to be in the midst of the land belonging to it. This land in our Translation is called suburbs because of its nearness to all their cities. But we must not thence imagine, that it means houses and streets adjoining to their cities, in which sense we sometimes use the word suburbs. For Moses plainly tells us they were places for their several sorts of cattle to feed in, such as might also be orchards or gardens for fruits, or perhaps for a little corn, comprehended in the word *their goods*. These fields he limits by 1000 cubits, which was just a quarter of an eastern mile, but amounts in mere length to 608 yards English measure, and therefore exceeds a quarter of an English mile by 168 yards in length. But it is certain that cattle cannot feed upon mere length; but this must signify the side of some surface of land bounded thereby, and we must have two sides of that surface given before we can find the area, or surface contained. Therefore, Moses, ver. 5. tells us, that on each side of each city they must measure 2000 cubits, which will determine no surface, unless we understand it to mean the two sides of a square, bounded on every side by 1000 cubits; these two sides multiplied into each other, will produce a square that contains just a million of square cubits, and that is a known and exact measure of just 100 *aroura*, and this shews that the 2000 cubits mentioned verse 5. are the two sides of that square, whereof the thousand mentioned verse 4. is one, and may be called the root of the square. This shews the agreement of the two different numbers. The reduction of this million of square cubits will be performed by the same method that I have used before. Therefore, first, I express 1000 Jewish by 1824 English feet, without any separatrix, according to the principles owned in decimal arithmetic,

arithmetic, and the square of that number will be 3326976, without a separatrix. Secondly, I divide this number by 43560 which are the square feet of an acre, and find the quote to be $76\angle 376859$, which signify 76 intire acres, and $\angle 376859$ decimals of an acre. Thirdly, to find what roods are contained in these decimals, I multiply them by four, the number of roods in an acre, and find the quote to be $1\angle 507436$, which proves that there is but one rood in them, and the six figures cut off by the separatrix (because there were six decimals in one of the multipliers) are all decimals of a rood. Fourthly, therefore to find what perches are in these last decimals, I multiply them by 40, which is the number of perches contained in a rood; the product is $20\angle 297440$; hereby I find there are 20 intire perches, besides the decimals of a perch placed after the separatrix. Fifthly, to find what square feet are in those last decimals, I multiply them by $272\angle 25$, which are the square feet and decimals in a perch, the product is

$80\angle 97804$, which is 80 square feet, and all the decimals not amounting to a square foot, I reject as inconsiderable in measure of land. Thus we have found that this and every other square, on each side of every *Levitical City*, was prescribed to be 76 acres, one rood, 20 perches, 80 square feet in our measure, but was just a million of square cubits in their measure.

To add the four squares belonging to one *Levitical City* together, the best way will be to take the first quote that we found in acre-measure, viz. $76\angle 376859$, and we must multiply it by four, and we shall find by the method I have used, all the four squares together to amount to 305 acres, two roods, one perch; we need not take notice of any lesser quantities in this case: we may also by this method find the sum of the acres belonging to all the 48 cities of the Levites, and many other improvements in this kind of measuring surfaces. But I leave them to the industry of others.

END OF THE FOURTH VOLUME.

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