

# E C C L E S I A S T E S ;

OR,

## T H E P R E A C H E R .

*THIS Book is generally allowed to have been written by Solomon ; and it is the opinion of many great men, that he wrote it upon his repentance after his fall. Expositors have varied greatly concerning the main scope and design of it ; and their different opinions have been accurately discussed by a late learned and laborious writer ; who, after examining the opinions of others, gives us his own, which we here subjoin, as it appears the most reasonable. " The book intitled in Greek " Ecclesiastes, and in English The Preacher, seems to be a philosophical discourse, written in " a rhetorical style, here and there interspersed with verses, which gave a handle to rank it " among the poetical books." The author's design is, to prove the immortality of the soul, or, rather, the necessity of another state after this life, from such arguments as may be afforded by reason and experience. In the course of the argument, the author now and then inserts some observations which do not directly respect the main design of the treatise, but must be looked upon as either consequences, naturally arising from the same principles which it was his business to establish, in order to come to the main conclusion ; or considerations, without which his principles must have lain exposed to objections and cavilleries, from the libertines or pretended free-thinkers of his age. My reasons for being of this opinion are chiefly two : the one is taken from the conclusion of the book ( where see the note ) ; the other from the whole series of the discourse, where I can find no connection of ideas, no design pursued, no constant method observed upon any other scheme. But to judge of the whole series, and to determine what it requires, that series must be consulted at length. The whole discourse may be reduced to three propositions ; every one of which, when properly reflected upon, yields a strong proof of a future state of rewards and punishments. But it must be observed, that though in all reasonings two propositions must be apprehended by the mind, in order to form any conclusion, yet it is not always necessary that both should be expressed. When the second is so obvious, that it in a manner obtrudes itself upon the mind as soon as the first is mentioned ; or so certainly true, that no man in his right senses can well question it ; then a philosopher may, according to the strictest rules, and an orator generally does, leave it to be understood and supplied by the attentive reader or hearer : and this is what the logicians call an enthymeme. Now I hope this proposition,— " Human affairs are under the " inspection of a wise, powerful, and infinitely perfect Being, who can never be supposed to act " but agreeably to his attributes,"— will be easily granted to be one of those which may be left unexpressed in a religious argument : Then let it be considered as the minor or second proposition of a syllogism, whereof any of the three we are going to mention is the major, or first, proposition ; and I am much mistaken if the doctrine that I look upon as being chiefly taught in this book does not appear to be the regular consequence of such a syllogism. These three propositions, every one of which is attended with its proper apparatus of proofs and special observations, are the following:—*

*I No labour or trouble of men in this world can ever be so profitable as to produce in them a lasting contentment and thorough satisfaction of mind. See chap. i. 2, 3.—II. Earthly goods, and whatever we can acquire by our utmost trouble and labour in this world, are so far from*

*making*

making us lastingly happy, that they may in general be even looked upon as real obstacles to our ease and tranquillity. See chap. v. 13.—III. Men know not what is or is not truly advantageous to them, because they are either ignorant or unmindful of that which must come to pass after they are dead. See chap. vi. 12. Therefore any one may conclude that there must be a state of true solid happiness for men out of this world; except He, who is allowed to have made them what they are, and to have implanted in their hearts that strong desire of happiness which often makes them miserable in this world, be absurdly supposed to have acted whimsically in their formation, and to act so still in the dispensation of Providence. See Desvoeux's Philosophical and Critical Essay on Ecclesiastes, and the subsequent notes which are chiefly from him, in proof of the truth and propriety of the scheme proposed.

## CHAP. I.

The Preacher sheweth that all human courses are vain; because the creatures are restless in their courses, they bring forth nothing new, and all old things are forgotten: and because he hath found it so in the studies of wisdom.

THE words of the Preacher, the son of David, king of Jerusalem.

## CHAP. I.

Ver. 1. The words of the Preacher] Or, orator. Mr. Desvoeux has shewn with great learning, that Solomon in this book appears nearly in the character of an eminent sophist among the Greeks, according to the primitive signification of that word, which implied philosophy and rhetoric joined together. The method of these ancient sages, as far as we can judge of it from what remained among their degenerate successors, was, to treat any subject which was reckoned worthy their learned dissertations in such a manner as to please the ear and improve the mind; which Tully calls the most perfect philosophy. The book of Ecclesiastes certainly deserves that character, if any in antiquity does. We must not conceive that Solomon was like the common and ordinary preachers among the Hebrews; yet it is certain, that he spake much in public for the instruction of the people; *There came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon:—All the earth sought the face of Solomon, to hear his wisdom:* See 1 Kings, iv. 31, 34. x. 24. From whence it is plain, that our author made public discourses on several subjects, and that people were in a manner called together by his fame from all nations round about to hear his wise performances. As no other son of David, who was king of Israel, was famous for his wisdom, or could claim the title of preacher or orator except Solomon, this edition evidently denotes the real author of the book: The style of which, says Bishop Lowth, is evidently singular; the diction particularly obscure; nor does the poetic character much abound in the composition and structure; which perhaps may properly be attributed to the nature of the argument. The Jews are displeas'd to have it reckoned among the poetic books; and if their authority availed much in matters of this kind, we should perhaps in this particular give in somewhat to their opinion. See his 24th Preflection.

2 Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.

3 What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?

4 ¶ One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever.

Ver. 2, 3. Vanity of vanities] Vanity of vanities, according to the Hebrew idiom, signifies, *the greatest vanity*. The original word *הֶבֶל* *hebel*, signifies, properly, *steam or vapour*, and is used to denote any thing which is transient and empty, in opposition to what is solid, substantial, and permanent. These verses contain the first proposition, "That no labour or trouble of men," &c. The proofs of which we here subjoin analytically:

Chap. Verse.

i. 2, 3.

4,—11.

12, &c.

16.—18.

ii. 1, 2.

3.—10.

11.

12—17.

18—23.

24—26.

iii. 1, &c.

9.

10, 11.

12—15.

16, 17.

18—21.

## I. Proposition.

1st Proof. The course of nature.

2d Proof. Men's occupations.

1st Head. Wisdom or philosophy.

2d Head. Pleasure.

Both jointly.

General conclusion of the 2d proof.

A review of the 2d proof, with special conclusions relating to every particular therein mentioned; viz.

1. Wisdom.

2. Riches.

3. Pleasure.

3d Proof. Inconstancy of men's will.

Conclusion of the 3d proof.

A review of the 2d and 3d proofs, considered jointly with special observations and corollaries.

1st Observation. God is inculpable.

2d Observation. God by his constant Providence and unerring wisdom governs the world.

1st Corollary. God shall redress all grievances.

2d Corollary. God must be exalted, and man humbled.

5 The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hatheth to his place where he arose.

6 The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north: it whirleth about continually: and the wind returneth again according to his circuits.

7 All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full: unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.

8 All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

9 ¶ The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done, is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under

the sun.

10 Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time which was before us.

11 There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.

12 ¶ I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem:

13 And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man, to be exercised therewith.

14 I have seen all the works that are done

Chap.	Verse.	
iii.	22.	3d Corollary. God alloweth men to enjoy the present.
iv.	1.	4th Proof. Men's neglect of proper opportunities evidenced in several instances; viz.
	1—3.	1. Oppression.
	4.	2. Envy.
	5, 6.	3. Idleness.
	7—12.	4. Avarice.
v	13—19.	5. Misapplication of esteem and regard.
		N. B. Chap. v. 1—9. is a digression containing several admonitions, in order to prevent any misconstruction of the foregoing remarks.
	10—12.	6. Expensive living.

Ver. 3. *What profit*] The word יתרון *iithron*, rendered *profit*, signifies the *surplus*, or that which remains after allowance is made for toils and fatigue, &c. It occurs eleven times in this book; and I think, says Mr. Desvœux, the original notion of *residue* or *remainder* may well be preferred in every place, and will generally set the author's meaning in a better light than any other expression; though it may be sometimes convenient to make use of some other word.

Ver. 4. *The earth abideth for ever*] *Remaineth the same for ever*] The meaning is, "The earth, considered as the scene of action, with respect to all mutable things, is no way affected by the continual and universal changes which happen on and about it."

Ver. 8. *All things are full of labour*] *All these considerations are wearisome.* Desvœux.

Ver. 9. *The thing that hath been*] *Yet what is the thing that hath been? the very same which shall be: And what is that which is done: the very same which shall be done: for there is nothing entirely new under the sun.* See Desvœux, and the LXX.

Ver. 10. *Is there any thing whereof, &c.*] *Is there any*

thing that will say, See this! this is new. Thus the beauty and energy of the original are preserved.

Ver. 11. *There is no remembrance, &c.*] This verse may be rendered, *There is no memorial to what happened before, neither shall there be any memorial to what shall happen henceforth, with those who shall come hereafter.* The first proof of the general proposition is contained in the 4th and following verses to the present; and is taken from the consideration of natural things. It may be paraphrased thus: "It is vain for men to expect any advantage from future changes in the course of nature; since not only the earth, but all the other visible parts of the universe, have hitherto remained the same throughout the different generations which have succeeded each other since the world began, ver. 4. The sun, the winds, the rivers, are in a continual motion, yet from the beginning to this time they have been constantly subject to the same laws and revolutions, ver. 5, 6, 7. If a man, not satisfied with bare contemplation, will undertake to find out the secret causes of these wonderfully constant effects, what does he get by his curiosity, but trouble and weariness? Repeated inquiries, when never attended with the hoped-for success, must soon become tiresome and vexatious. An inquisitive man would fain look into all the recesses of nature, and hear all that others have to say on what he is not able to discover himself: but he never can compass his end, and satisfy his curiosity, either through his own researches, or by getting acquainted with those of others, ver. 8. It is even beyond his power to mark any phenomenon which may with any certainty be looked upon as a new one. Natural revolutions are such, that you have no sign nor token to distinguish that which happens for the first time from that which hath happened many times before; and that course is so well settled, that the same disappointments which have hitherto been met with are to be expected for the future." ver. 9, 10, 11. Desvœux.

Ver. 12. *I, the preacher, was king, &c.*] *I, who have assembled you, was king, &c.*

Ver. 13. *This sore travail hath God given*] That is to say,

under the sun; and, behold, all *is* vanity and vexation of spirit.

15 *That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.*

16 I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all *they* that have been

before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.

17 And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit.

18 For in much wisdom *is* much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.

say, the fatiguing employment which God gave to the sons of men, to give evidence of himself. See the paraphrase on the 15th verse.

*Ver. 15. And that which is wanting cannot be numbered] Nor can men's wants be numbered.* For the first clause of this verse, see chap. vii. 13. From the 12th to this verse, we have the second proof of the first proposition, taken from the various occupations of men in search of happiness, which Solomon had both opportunities to observe from his high station, and abilities to observe rightly, from the wisdom he was endowed with, ver. 12, 13. These he found to be such, that no lasting advantage could accrue from them to mankind; and this for two reasons; first, because that which is, or appears to be, wrong, cannot by their utmost efforts be redressed; secondly, because their wants are so many, that they are not able to number them, ver. 14, 15. This double consideration seems to point out a twofold distribution of the occupations of men, as they propose to themselves either to rectify what is wrong, or to satisfy their own wants: the one is the business of the philosopher, the other of the man of pleasure; and both subjects are immediately resumed; *First*, singly, in the next verses, and chap. ii. 1, 2. and then jointly, chap. ii. 3—10. in order to be more particularly considered.

*Ver. 17. And I gave my heart to know wisdom] For I applied myself to the knowledge of wisdom, and the knowledge of whatever is shining, and of science.* We meet in all languages with words which are as much, or even more frequently, made use of in a metaphorical, than in a literal way; yet you can never fully and rightly understand them, unless you keep an eye to the primitive literal signification, and have a particular regard to the circumstances wherein such a word is employed. *הלל* *hallel*, seems to be one of those words, which, by not paying a due regard to this observation, has been often misinterpreted. One of its metaphorical meanings has been even mistaken for the primitive signification; which is contrary to nature. Leigh rightly observes, that its primitive signification is, either to shine, or to make another thing shine; which is done in a metaphorical way by praising or valuing. See Desvœux, 384, and Parkhurst on the word.

*Ver. 18. For in much wisdom, &c.]* The sum of the matter, from the 16th verse, is this; First, the research of wisdom, nay, the very possession of that science, whereby one is fully enabled to distinguish good from evil, avails nothing to solid happiness: on the contrary, it even serves frequently to embitter our lives; as nothing can be more afflicting to a rational mind, than to see, and not be able to reform, the vices of his fellow-creatures.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Solomon upon the throne never appeared so august and venerable, as here he does in the pulpit. We have,

1. The titles that he assumes, *The preacher*, or *קהלה* *kobeleth*; some render *gathered*, and, supplying the word *soul*, make it a description of his own state, recovered from his grievous backslidings; and they who are thus restored are bound to keep up everlastingly a grateful memorial of the mercy: or *the gatherer*, to whom the people resorted to hear his lessons of instruction; or perhaps he now collected his people together, who had been justly offended at his unfaithfulness; that they might hear his recantation, that he might take shame to himself for the offence he had given, and caution others by his sad experience to avoid the paths of sin in which he had walked. Thus true penitents desire ever to take shame to themselves publicly, where their offence was public; and, as far as lies in them, seek to recover those whom their influence or ill example led astray: *The son of David*, an honourable relation; but which rendered his sin the more aggravated, considering the education he had received under such a father: *king of Jerusalem*; the dignity of his station made his example more pernicious, and in *Jerusalem* also, where God's presence dwelt, and his seat of worship was fixed; which rendered his sins more infamously scandalous: thus, as true penitents do, he dwelt upon the aggravation of his guilt; or perhaps he mentions his station as that which should engage attention from the people, and give weight to his discourse.

2. The text of the discourse is, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity*; and this is redoubled, to shew his own deep conviction of the truth, and to affect his hearers with a sense of it. The world and all the things of it are utterly unsatisfactory; they perish in the using, afford no solid comfort to the soul, and disappoint all those who place their confidence in them, or expect happiness from them; and they, who have with greatest eagerness strove to quench their thirst at those broken cisterns, by sad experience have found them vanity of vanities: none had ever greater abilities to gratify his desires, none ever with more boundless indulgence sought satisfaction in earthly things, than Solomon; and, after long proof, this is his deliberate conclusion.

3. He appeals to universal experience for confirmation of the truth. *What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?* Poor mortals toil and labour after the riches, honours, and pleasures of this inferior world, and, when they think to find a reality, grasp a shadow: even here man's life is often embittered by his abundance,

and

CHAP. II.

*The vanity of human courses in the works of pleasure. Though the wise be better than the fool, yet both have one event. The vanity of human labour in leaving it they know not to whom. Nothing better than joy in our labour; but that is God's gift.*

**I** SAID in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy

pleasure: and, behold, this also *is* vanity.

2 I said of laughter, *It is* mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?

3 I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine (yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom); and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what *was* that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the

and his pleasures prove his torment: at death, nothing that he possesses can profit him to gain a moment's respite, or pass with him into the grave; and after death how insignificant will all those things appear, unable to purchase the pardon of one sin, or stand us in any stead at the bar of judgment? We must labour for a better portion above the sun, if we would be happy to eternity.

2dly, To prove the vanity of all things that he had asserted, he shews,

1. The shortness and uncertainty of all our earthly enjoyments: we are posting fast to the grave, and treading upon the heels of those who are now stepping into it, and must quickly follow them; our abode here is but for a moment, and that continually in jeopardy: a very short-lived pleasure, therefore, can the creature afford us.

2. When we are gone, *the earth abideth for ever*; we can carry nothing out of it: the world must endure its appointed time, and then, with all the works upon it, be burnt up.

3. All the things in the world are in a state of revolution; the sun rises and sets; the winds veer round the compass; the rivers ceaseless roll, an emblem of man's fluctuating state, seeking rest and finding none, and halting with full speed to the dust whence he came, as these return again to the same place from which they at first set forth. Nor in all his career can he find,

4. The least solid satisfaction: the sea will sooner overflow, than the heart be filled with creature-good; all the rivers of prosperity are insufficient; the finest prospect, the most melodious airs, soon pall the senses; we want new objects to satisfy curiosity, and grow tired of them as soon as they are familiar. *All things are full of labour*, nothing can be obtained without it; and when we have toiled in the pursuit, we find that we have wearied ourselves for very vanity; *man cannot utter it*, how wearisome a world this is, and how empty are all its enjoyments.

5. There is nothing new: we are happy to flatter ourselves with being able to discover arcana in nature unknown before, and improvements in arts and sciences such as would shame all former generations; but it is only what *hath been*; the course of nature is the same, men's hearts the same, their intellectual faculties the same; and what we call new is only so to us, for want of records of former ages, or through our confined knowledge of the world at present: we must look above, if we would have *all things new*, Rev. **xxi.**; new hearts, fashioned by Divine grace here, and a new world, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and where vanity shall be no more.

6. Do what we will to make ourselves memorable, we

shall be disappointed, and not live even in fame: few of the great personages that have appeared, or the wonders that they have wrought, have found an historian to transmit their remembrance to posterity: they are sunk in the lake of oblivion; and those of future ages, who succeed us, will perhaps never so much as hear that such persons as we are ever existed. The only way to secure deathless fame is, to have our names written, in the book of life of the Lamb, among his worthies, whose memorial shall endure not only through all the generations of time, but through the ages of eternity.

3dly, Having asserted in general the vanity of all sublunary good, he passes on to the grand particulars which engage men's pursuits, in order to confirm the truth that he had advanced. He begins with wisdom, of earthly things the most excellent, and proves the vanity of this by experience and argument.

1. He tried what happiness human wisdom in its most refined and exalted state would bring; and he possessed such advantages to make the experiment complete, that none after him will presume to be a more competent judge. He was a *preacher*, endued with gifts of nature the most singular; a *king*, who had it in his power to furnish himself with all possible assistance in the prosecution of his studies; he was *over Israel*, a wise and understanding people, and in *Jerusalem*, the very seat of wisdom, where he had opportunity of conversing with God's prophets and priests, and with the wisest of men who resorted to him from all the parts of the earth: and his application was as indefatigable as his advantages were singular: He set himself *to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven*; the depths of philosophy, the secrets of nature; the qualities of animals, vegetables, fossils, and all that is above or beneath the earth, 1 Kings iv. 33.; the mysteries of politics, trade, manufactures; the history of mankind, ancient and modern, their manners, customs, and ways: nor was the pursuit unsuccessful; he attained astonishing heights of science; *I have seen all the works that are done under the sun*, whether of nature or of art; and none who had been before him, even in Jerusalem the seat of learning, had ever gone so far; and withal, his knowledge was deeply digested, and the fruit of *great experience*. And that by contraries he might the better know the value of wisdom, he set his heart *to know madness and folly* also; to observe the follies and vices, as well as virtues of mankind. Thus furnished, as far as the human understanding could soar, he was fully qualified to judge what happiness all the attainments of human literature and science could afford. But,

2. The experiment answered not at all the pains it cost; *the*

days of their life.

4 I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards:

5 I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all *kind* of fruits:

6 I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees:

7 I got *me* servants and maidens, and had

servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me:

8 I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men-fingers, and women-fingers, and the delights of the sons of men, *as* musical instruments, and that of all sorts.

*the pursuit was attended with sore travail; for no labour is more fatiguing than that of the mind, intensely engaged; the just punishment of God, for man's daring to affect a wisdom which was forbidden him: the possession afforded him only a view of the vexation, as well as vanity, of the world: the more he knew of men and things, the more he saw of what grieved and vexed him; while he felt his own inability withal to rectify the wretchedness and wants of this disordered world. That which is crooked cannot be made straight; such is the corruption of human nature, that no attainments of wisdom can mend it, even when we see what is fit and right; the bias to evil is so strong, that reason and philosophy remonstrate in vain; nothing but Divine grace, which changes the heart, can make our paths straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered: the more we know, the more we are convinced that we know nothing, and discover the endless defects in our own understanding, and wants which can neither be numbered nor supplied: so that, upon the whole, we cannot but conclude, in much wisdom is much grief; it is painful to acquire; serves to excite our thirst, without being able to satisfy it; enlarges our knowledge of human miseries, and makes us more sensibly affected with them. In short, he that increaseth knowledge, only increaseth sorrow; and every new attainment affords fresh cause of disquietude and dissatisfaction. But there is a wisdom which will not thus disappoint the attentive inquirer; the knowledge of Jesus, the wisdom of God, and the mystery of godliness; the more we are acquainted with it, the more satisfaction will it afford to our souls; and, however defective our measure of it may be here, the least attainment contains a divine hope, that hereafter it will be complete and perfect, when we shall know even as we are known.*

## CHAP. II.

*Ver. 2. I said of laughter, it is mad] I said to laughter, how dost thou shine? and to pleasure, what does that avail? See the note on the 17th verse of the foregoing chapter. The sum of these verses is, secondly; neither does the enjoyment of pleasure yield a solid happiness; for he who enjoys it must be soon convinced that it leaves no solid satisfaction behind it; which our author proves by his own experience, having found but a vain eclat in mirth and pleasure.*

*Ver. 3. I sought, &c.] I sought in mine heart that I might force my senses into a habit of drinking wine, (yet leading my heart into wisdom,) and that I might apprehend what is in folly, until I should see, where is that good for the children of men, which they pursue under heaven every day of their life. Desvœux. Solomon's design, as here represented, was, to*

catch hold of whatever he should find in folly, rather for the improvement of his knowledge, than for the sake of present enjoyment. This verse contains a fine instance of the *antithesis*; where the flesh or sensual appetite is opposed to the heart, the one being drawn unto wine, the other led into wisdom; where we have the two ends toward which each of these subjects is carried, wine and wisdom, and the manner in which each of them is influenced to take these different courses. The verb נָהַג *nahag*, applied to the heart means to *guide*, to lead from one place to another; and is constantly made use of with respect to animated creatures, men or tame animals, who use their activity towards attaining the end proposed. The meaning of the verb מָשַׁבַּח *masbak*, employed with respect to the flesh is, *to draw with violence*: in the proper sense, it is always applied to mere passive beings; and in the figurative, it always retains a notion of force and constraint. Thus it seems the sacred writer wanted to inform his hearers, that he could not be brought into a habit of drinking without putting some violence upon his own inclinations; whereas his natural bent prompted him to the search after wisdom; that he put this force upon his own inclination with no other view, but that he might acquire an experimental knowledge of what so many men call happiness, and might thereby be enabled to judge of its value; and lastly, that at the same time he pursued this course, he did not grow passionate for wine, which must have disqualified him for judging; but preserved such a command over that habit, as to be led from it by wisdom, whenever he should find he knew enough of it to form a right judgment. And, lest his meaning should be misunderstood, he does not say positively that he put that force upon his flesh; but that he *took pains, or sought* to do it: whereas, with respect to the leading of his heart to wisdom, he directly ascribes it to himself, or to the propensity of his soul that way. There is still another opposition, relating to the time spent in pursuing that course into which he took pains to force himself. The lovers of wine will make the drinking of it a *good* or happiness to themselves *under heaven*, as long as they live; but he gave way to that foolish and sinful habit no longer than it was necessary for his wise purpose of being thoroughly acquainted with the nature of that wherein men of pleasure place their happiness. *Until I should see where that good, or happiness, lies for the children of men, which they will pursue under heaven the number of the days of their life.*

*Ver. 6. To water therewith the wood, &c.] To water therewith the nursery of young trees. Desvœux. Hebrew, the forest-budding trees.*

*Ver. 8. As musical instruments, &c.] A captive woman, nay,*

9 So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.

10 And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all

my labour.

11 Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

12 ¶ And I turned myself to behold wis-

dom, several captive women. It is doubted, whether the Hebrew words, rendered by us *musical instruments*, &c. signify things or persons. Mr. Desvoeux is of opinion that they signify persons. Any one, says he, who will read the original with attention, may easily perceive that this catalogue of Solomon's acquisitions from ver. 4 to 8. is divided into several members by as many verbs; each of which has one or more substantives either governed by it, if it be an active one, or belonging to it, as its nominative, if it be a passive verb. But it must be farther observed, that none of these members take in both things and persons. Our author was so accurately exact in preserving that distinction, that, though slaves and cattle were considered in nearly the same light by the ancients, and though he made use of the same verb with respect to both, yet he repeated that verb twice, rather than bring both under the same head. This seems a probable reason that שרדה *shiddah*, and שרות *shiddoth*, which are brought by Solomon under the same head with men-fingers and women-fingers, are persons and not things. שרדה *shiddah*, is very properly derived from the verb שרד *shadad*, signifying to *plunder*, or *lay waste*; and so may signify a woman who is the subject of warlike devastation; a fair captive; and it is very reasonable to suppose, that in the catalogue of the acquisitions he made in order to indulge his pleasure, Solomon would not forget that circumstance whereof the historian speaks so strongly: *Solomon had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines.* 1 Kings, xi. 1—3. And besides we should remember, that the possession of female captives was one of the most distinguished marks of ancient grandeur. This mention of the *peculiar treasure of kings and provinces*, confirms this opinion; for these treasures did not consist of gold and silver only; female captives made no inconsiderable part of it. See Judg. v. 30. and Homer, II. ii. line 355. We may farther observe, that the phrase, *The delights of the sons of men*, confirms this interpretation. I do not know how far some people's fondness for music may influence their judgment in the application of this character; but when I consider not only Solomon's inclination for the sex, but chiefly the general taste and manners of his time, which was not long after the Trojan war; I can scarcely imagine how it is possible to take *the delights of the sons of men* in any other sense than we have given above. Whoever has read any thing of the profane history of those early times, must know, that the main spring of all the transactions of the most celebrated heroes was love; if one may give that name to an unbounded lust, which prompted them to lay violent hands on all that was fair; and many particulars contained both in the historical and moral books of scripture prove, that beauty was no less admired in Ju-

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dæ than in other parts of the world. See Desvoeux, p. 437. and the Inquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer.

Ver. 9. *Also my wisdom remained with me*] The meaning is, that Solomon's greatness had no way impaired his wisdom, as is too frequently the case.

Ver. 10. *And this was my portion of all my labour*] *But this was my portion from all my labour.* The word חלק *chalek*, rendered *portion*, constantly implies something which is an advantage, or is considered as such by him who receives it. The Hebrew orator has taken care to give his own definition of what he meant by a man's share or portion in this world, or in it from his labour. *There is nothing better in the labour of man*, says he, chap. iii. 22. *than that he should receive pleasure from it*, because that is his *portion*: and again, chap. v. 18. *That itself is his portion.* It is but just that we should remember that definition in other passages where the expression is used without being particularly defined. This will explain the meaning of several otherwise obscure passages; as ver. 21. *leaving one's portion to another man*; i. e. leaving him the enjoyment of what you had acquired, with a design to enjoy it yourself: chap. v. 19. *taking one's portion*; i. e. enjoying it; chap. ix. 6. *having a portion under the sun*; i. e. being in a capacity of enjoying the pleasures of this world. See chap. ix. 2. The sum of these verses, from the third, is this: When each of the methods of pursuing happiness before-mentioned had proved ineffectual and insufficient by itself, nothing remained for Solomon, that he might be thoroughly enabled to judge of them, but to try both *jointly*; and this, he tells us, was the step he took. "I did not (says he) launch into pleasure like a thoughtless libertine; but with an inquisitive mind, and a settled design, not only to enjoy, but also to reflect upon my enjoyments; and thus to join together that course of life which by the wise is reputed folly, and that very study and application from which *wise men* get their denomination. In this I was so successful, as to procure to myself all the conveniences of life, and refinements of pleasure, which the greatest plenty can afford, or the nicest taste invent. But, after all, I found that present enjoyment was the only advantage I had gained."

Ver. 11. *Then I looked on all, &c.*] *Then I turned myself on all, &c.* See the next verse, where the same verb פנה *panah*, in the original is so rendered. The author represents himself as a man who, being uneasy at his not finding the wished-for happiness, turns from one object to another towards all that is about him; and yet cannot discover what he looks for. This is the more remarkable, as the figure is closely pursued in the following part of the discourse. Here Solomon turns himself toward the objects to take a view of

3 F

them:

dom, and madnes, and folly: for what *can* the man *do* that cometh after the king? *even* that which hath been already done.

13 Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darknes.

14 The wise man's eyes *are* in his head; but the fool walketh in darknes: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all.

15 Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then *more* wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also *is* vanity.

16 For *there is* no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now *is* in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise *man*? As the fool.

17 Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun *is* grievous unto me: for all *is* vanity and vexation of spirit.

18 ¶ Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me.

19 And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise *man* or a fool? Yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This *is* also vanity.

20 Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun.

21 For there is a man whose labour *is* in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it *for* his portion. This also *is* vanity, and a great evil.

22 For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun?

23 For all his days *are* sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity.

them: but, as a slight view was not sufficient to entitle him to decide that there were no hopes of finding happiness among them, he *went round*, ver. 20.; where I make no difficulty to render the verb, *I considered every way*, as that word *surrounding* evidently is a metaphorical one. See chap. iv. 1. This verse contains the general conclusion of the second proof, inferred from the most accurate inquiry into the various methods pursued by men in search of happiness; which conclusion is this, that the pains and trouble necessary to procure pleasure and to acquire knowledge on the one hand, and the value of the acquisition on the other, being duly weighed, there is no overplus; for the most a man gets is but the just value of his trouble; and even that is but transitory. Besides this general conclusion, which flows from the joint consideration of the several particulars whereof men's occupations in this world chiefly consist, special observations may be made on each of those particulars viewed separately. To this purpose our author resumes and considers them again in the subsequent part of this chapter; and even more distinctly than before: for whereas in his first partition he had ranked all under two classes, philosophy and pleasure, the second of which, as he treated it, contained the acquisition of riches, as well as that of pleasure properly so called; now he makes three distinct heads; for the first of which, see on ver. 17.

Ver. 17. *Therefore I hated life*] From the 12th to this verse, we have a review of the second proof; first, with respect to wisdom. The more one compares together wisdom or knowledge, and ignorance, which no one can be better qualified to do than king Solomon was, or perform with more exactness; the more it appears that the former has by much the advantage of the latter; ver. 12,

13.: yet that advantage does not reach so far as to establish a visible inequality of happiness between the wise and ignorant. Death is equally unavoidable to both; ver. 14. From thence two consequences naturally arise; first, even that which is the most valuable in itself, avails so little in this world, that it may very reasonably, with respect to it, be accounted but a vain advantage. Wisdom itself does not secure immortality, either in a literal or a metaphorical sense; and whatever trouble may be taken in erecting monuments to the wise, it is so much lost with respect to the ignorant, who will most probably be the greatest number, as well hereafter as they are now; ver. 15, 16. Secondly, life itself is unworthy our love and attachment; since both its conclusion and the occupations in which it is employed concur to demonstrate its emptiness and vanity; ver. 17.

Ver. 19. *Yet shall he have rule, &c.*] *Yet shall he be master of all that I have acquired through both my labour and prudent management under the sun.* Desvœux.

Ver. 20, 21. *Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair, &c.*] *And I considered every way, so that my heart despaired of ever gaining any sort of advantage from all the trouble that I took under the sun;* ver. 21. *Since a man who labours wisely, knowingly, and successfully, must nevertheless leave his share to another man who did not join in the labour.*

Ver. 23. *And his travail, grief*] *And grief his employment.* The second observation (the subject of which is riches, and which begins at the 18th verse), and the conclusion which flows from it, are so blended together that they cannot be easily disjoined. When a man dies, which, as was said before, must be the case of the wise as well as of the ignorant, the fruits of all his labour and industry fall into the



24 ¶ *There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw that it was from*

the hand of God.

25 For who can eat, or who else can hasten *henceunto*, more than I?

26 For God giveth to a man, that *is* good

the hands of his heir, whether that heir inherit his predecessor's abilities or not. Thus, he who had no share in the trouble, labour, and solicitude, wherein you spent your days, and from which you seldom were free, not even in the time which is devoted to rest, comes to the enjoyment of what cost you so much; ver. 18, 19. Therefore, as far as you are personally concerned in it, your labour is lost, and your occupations are vain. Is it not then highly reasonable to *bate* both the occupations of men in this world, and that which they can get by it, or rather, (to soften the harshness of the Hebrew phrase by reducing it to its true meaning,) not to place our affections in this world, and to set very little value on it and its contents. Ver. 20—23.

Ver. 24. *There is nothing better for a man, &c.*] This verse literally runs thus; *No good in man that he eateth and drinketh, and maketh his soul to see good in his labour; that itself I perceived, that it cometh from the hand of God.* That Solomon does not pretend to question the reality of pleasurable enjoyments has been observed by others, and is plain from many passages in this book; but it is plain likewise, that he does not assert it in this place, the meaning of which is so obvious from the context, that I wonder it has escaped the notice of commentators; for the opposition between *בְּאִדָּמָה* *baadam*, in man, and *בְּיָד* *miad*, in the hand, is manifest: *The advantage of enjoying life is not in man, or within the power of man: but it comes from the hand of the Almighty, &c.* The sense is apparently the same with Job, xxi. 16. *Lo! their good is not in their hand.* See the paraphrase on ver. 26. Houbigant renders the present verse, *Neither is there felicity in the man who eats and drinks, and refreshes himself with the good things gained by his labour. This also I considered to be from the hand of God; and he reads the next verse, For who eateth or drinketh, but through his gift?*

Ver. 25, 26. *For who can eat, &c.*] *For who shall eat, and who shall enjoy without him? It might also be rendered, For who shall eat, and who shall reflect more than I? Ver. 26. For he giveth wisdom and knowledge and pleasure to the man who is good in his sight; while he giveth the sinner a troublesome occupation, that he may gather and heap up riches to give to him who is good before God.* See Desvœux, p. 550. The third observation contained in these verses, and the 24th, is upon pleasure, which differs chiefly from riches in this, that when once it is procured, as it is at the same time enjoyed, it is so much the property of the enjoyer, that it can by no means be transferred to another; and so far it may be looked upon as a real good: but is that good the real result of the labour and trouble we put ourselves to, in order to procure it? It seems to be so at first; but, upon cooler reflection, it appears to be quite otherwise. The bounty of the Supreme giver of every good gift is the only source it proceeds from; ver. 24. The Almighty does not always permit him who gathers the means of pleasure to enjoy them himself; and often employs the

sinner to make as it were a provision for the just, whom he endoweth with wisdom and knowledge, and puts him into possession of those means of pleasure which another has heaped up for him. From this observation it is very reasonable to conclude, that the anxious research of pleasure is as vain as the rest of men's occupations in this world; since, after all, the end is not obtained by the most eager pursuer, but by him only whom God is pleased to bless.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Since the pursuit of wisdom disappointed all his hopes, behold the system changed; and that happiness sought in the indulgencies of sense, and the flowery paths of pleasure, which the regions of science could not bestow.

1. In mirth the jocund hours are passed; no joy withheld, no amusement forgotten; the poignancy of wit, and flights of humour, keep the gay circle in a burst of laughter: in dance and song, and all *the delights of the sons of men*, the live-long day is spent; while music's enchanting sound, with a vast variety of instruments, pours forth a flood of harmony; and pleasure reigns throughout the palaces of Zion: but is this man's proper good? no, in no wise; the event declared: *behold, this also is vanity*, poor and unsatisfactory. *I said of laughter, It is mad*; it diverts the soul from the ways of serious godliness; and what can be greater madness, than for momentary mirth to plunge our souls into eternal mourning? *What doeth it?* it can scarcely afford a transient respite from present griefs; for even in laughter often the heart is sad; and the end of that mirth, which tends to blunt the edge of divine conviction, or to dissipate the impressions which God's word hath made on our minds, must be heaviness: the time will come when none of these can afford the least satisfaction; the witty jest can no longer brighten the countenance, ghastly in the convulsions of death; the songs of vanity are pangs to the ear, which, lying on the bed of sickness, can scarcely bear the lightest foot that treads the floor; and the gay circle can afford no delight to the eye ready to close in death.

2. From wine he tried to find the joy which pleasure had denied: The board is filled; the sparkling glass goes round; and, though with reluctance he descended from the intellectual pleasures of a man to the enjoyments of a beast, he resolved to try the experiment, *and to lay hold on folly*; yet even when he made the attempt, he could not soberly but condemn the indulgence, and purposed to abstain from grosser excesses, and keep folly, as it were, at bay, *acquainting himself yet with wisdom*; maintaining such a guard over his appetite, that he might not be enslaved by drunkenness or excess, and only taste enough to satisfy him what was *that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life*; and as he owns the attempt folly, so he found it; for to seek, from the intoxication of our senses, any real good to our souls, must be indeed the foolishness of folly.

in his sight, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to *him that is good before God.* This also *is* vanity and vexation of spirit.

3. The board is cleared, the songs of mirth are silent; another scheme of happiness succeeds and promises greater satisfaction: the noble plans are drawn, the materials ready, the gorgeous palace rises majestic to view; the vineyards are planted, the gardens laid out with taste, the lawns extended, the woods disposed with nicest judgment; the trees, for fruit or show, exquisite of their kind; large pieces of water collected for use and beauty, to please the eye and fertilize the soil: a vast retinue ever waited his commands in all the various offices of his household; and, far from being impoverished with all his works, his income exceeded his expence: his treasuries were filled; his cabinet stored with jewels and whatever was exquisite and curious; and from the distant provinces the richest presents courted his acceptance, sent from tributary kings, or governors, or from such as sought, from his transcendent wisdom, solution of their difficulties, or counsel in their emergencies. Thus in riches, magnificence, and splendor, he quite obscured all his predecessors; and still *his wisdom remained*: amidst all his other pursuits he kept possession of himself, and was not so enslaved by any of them, as not to be able to form a right judgment of them; though he gave the most unbounded scope to the gratification of his desires, kept back his heart from no joy, tasted his pleasures with the highest relish of delight, and enjoyed all the fruits of his labours without a disappointment or check to allay the satisfaction: yet on the review, revolving all his works, the thought, the care, the expence they cost him, and how little real happiness they afforded him, he solemnly declares all to be *vanity and vexation of spirit*; and neither the employments nor enjoyments under the sun afforded the least real *profit*. They must look higher than the sun, who would secure substantial good.

2dly, Behold this wisest of men,

1. Re-assuming his pursuit of wisdom, though he had found it unsatisfactory: he might perhaps have overlooked something, or been hasty in his conclusion; at least he was reduced to this, because on reflection he was convinced that all his other schemes of happiness were, comparatively, madness and folly, and the pleasures of science as much superior to the joys of sense, as light excelleth darkness: and in all his decisions we may safely acquiesce; nor vainly essay by our own experience to prove those things madness and folly, which one, so much abler to make the experiment, and so much wiser to determine upon the case, has already resolved.

2. The repeated trial confirmed his former conclusion; for, though wise men seem to have some advantages over fools, yet all their foresight often stands them in as little stead as the fools' blunders: *One event happeneth to them all*; their bodies are liable to the same diseases, the same disasters attend them both, the same grave awaits them, and, when dead, they will be alike forgotten; even he himself, great as wise, was not exempt from this common fate: *As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth to me; even to me, as the original emphatically expresses it; and therefore he*

concludes, *Why was I then more wise? why take so much pains? What profit is there of my labour, when I stand on the same level, and am exposed to the same disasters as others? Then I said, This also is vanity, and the pursuit of worldly wisdom unprofitable and useless.* Let all of this world, proud of learning, abilities, wealth, or station, hear and weigh this mortifying truth; The fool and the beggar in the grave must be their equals; there no distinction is known but what divine grace alone makes.

3dly, There seems to be something of impatience, as well as dissatisfaction, discovered by Solomon.

1. He appears heartily tired of all the schemes he had pursued, and the works in which he had been engaged; not only *he hated his labour*, was disappointed, and weary of the vanities he had sought, *but hated life itself* because of the troubles and vexations with which it is embittered, and wanted a rest that he could not find on earth. *In despair* he quitted all his toils, closed his books, dismissed his builders, forsook his pleasures; and now, assured that no happiness could be found beneath the sun, began, with holy indifference about creature-vanities, to seek the substantial bliss which is to be found in a better world. *Note*; It is happy for us, when the conviction of the insufficiency of the creature leads us up to the all-sufficiency of the Creator. God in Christ is the only portion that can fill the restless desires of an immortal soul.

2. He gives his reasons why he was tired of life and its toils. *The work under the sun was grievous*; not only the employments of the body, but the more fatiguing application of the mind; the *labour of wisdom, knowledge, and equity*; how to transact the business of our station with greatest advantage and integrity; the care and concern about which occasions many sorrows, through the disappointments and perplexities in which we are involved; and what in the day dwells thus anxiously on our minds, at night drives sleep from our eye-lids: such a vanity and vexation of spirit do they find this world to be, who are most occupied in it. And for whom do they toil? not for themselves, but for those who come after them. At death, all must be left behind to one who enters into possession of what cost him no pains; and it lightly goes; or he takes it as *his portion*, and thinks that he has thereby obtained a prescription to be idle and useless in his generation; for *who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool* that will inherit the fruit of their labours? The estate raised by equity and prudence is perhaps wasted in extravagance; and what the wise laboured all their days to erect, the fool that follows wantonly pulls down, as was the case with Solomon himself; and perhaps he, in the spirit of prophecy, foresaw how unworthy Rehoboam would prove. *What therefore hath a man of all his labour?* nothing that yields him substantial joy, or abiding satisfaction.

3. He declares what is the proper use of creature-comforts: to enjoy them in moderation, possess them with thankfulness, and improve them to the glory of God; and this must be the gift of God, who alone can give us a heart

CHAP. III.

*By the necessary change of times, vanity is added to human travail. There is an excellency in God's works: but as for man, God shall judge his works there, and here he shall be like a beast.*

**T**O every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up *that which is planted*;

3 A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

5 A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

6 A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

7 A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

8 A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

9 What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth?

10 I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it.

11 ¶ He hath made every thing beautiful

heart to spend freely what we have gained wisely; and, with a sense of his love enable us to relish the good that he bestows, and make even our worldly enjoyments the means of drawing us nearer to his blessed self: to this Solomon hastened; and the wise will seek to follow his example.

4. He concludes with observing the misery of the wicked, who have no heart to use aright the blessings that God bestows upon them: they are cursed with perpetual anxiety and toil, both to amass and to preserve their gains; they have no comfort in them, but pine in the midst of plenty; and, uncharitable and cruel, have no heart to open their stores for the relief of the needy; till God at last cuts them off, or takes from them what they so abuse, to give it to others who will employ their abundance to a better purpose: *and this also is vanity and vexation of spirit to the wicked, who cannot bear the thoughts of parting with his possessions, and grieves at the prospect of seeing his beloved riches liberally spent, or in the hands of those who will devote them to the glory of God and the good of their fellow-creatures.*

CHAP. III.

*Ver. 1. To every thing there is a season] There is a fixed season for every thing; nay, all the determinations of man's will under heaven have their proper time. Solomon says of all things in general, that they have an appointed season; or, according to the propriety of the word זמן zeman, a prepared time. This construction of the passage is strongly confirmed by the contents of the annexed list; for, except the first head, namely, the time of our birth and death, every article therein mentioned as having a time depends on the will of men; and the first article itself, as understood by the Chaldee paraphrast, falls more or less within the determination of man's will.*

*Ver. 5. A time to cast away stones] This is differently understood. Calmet says, it may either signify, "a time to cast away stones with a sling, and a time to collect them again into a bag;" or, "A time to cast stones on a field to render it barren, and a time to collect the stones out of a field to render it fertile." See 2 Kings, iii. 25. Or,*

"A time to cast away improper, and to collect proper stones for building." See ver. 3.

*Ver. 8. A time to love, &c.] The third proof of the proposition laid down in the beginning, and comprised in ver. 1—8. is taken from the endless vicissitude of things in this world, and especially of those which depend on our choice. There is nothing that a man can fix upon, of which it is in his power to say, I will always be in the same mind with respect to it. The most contradictory resolutions have their time with us, and succeed one another, as appears from the annexed list of contrarieties. Thus we do implicitly acknowledge the vanity of those occupations, which are the result of our determinations: for what is changing, but owning that that which you alter either was not, or at least has ceased to be, proper, and of consequence had no permanent goodness in it?*

*Ver. 9. What profit hath he that worketh, &c.] What remaineth to him that worketh from that upon which he bestoweth his labour? The consequence of the preceding proof is obvious. It is not in the power of men to get by that which is properly their own work, and the result of their choice, any thing that they have a right to call a solid advantage; since they do not know but the time is coming, when that which they look upon shall appear to them in a quite different light. This and the foregoing proof were both taken from the same subject: viz. the occupations of men in this world, or the methods they take in the pursuit of happiness. These were considered, first, in themselves, and with respect to the end proposed: secondly, with respect to the choice which determines us to follow different methods at different times. Now, having done with those proofs, considered as such, our author resumes the subject which had afforded them; viz. the occupations of men in this world, in order to make some new observations on it, and to draw some important consequences from the whole, which are inserted by way of corollaries: and he gives an intimation of his thus resuming that subject, by making use (ver. 10.) of the very same words wherein he had declared the general purport of his argument, ch. i. 13. See the general analysis on ch. i. 2.*

*Ver. 11. Also he hath set the world in their heart] He hath even*

in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.

12 ¶ I know that *there is* no good in them, but for *a man* to rejoice, and to do good in his life.

13 And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it *is* the gift of God.

14 I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that *men* should fear before him.

15 That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.

16 ¶ And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, *that wickedness was*

there; and the place of righteousness, *that iniquity was* there.

17 I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for *there is* a time there for every purpose and for every work.

18 ¶ I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts.

19 For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts, even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast: for all *is* vanity.

20 All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.

21 ¶ Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?

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*even set that eternity in their hearts, without which no man can find out the design of that work which God hath done from beginning to end.* The word עולם, rendered *time* in our version, but here *eternity*, Mr. Desvœux has fully proved to signify properly an indefinite duration. See page 553. Solomon's first observation is, that God, who set men upon that ungrateful task, purposely that they might find him out, has done nothing but what is fit, though the fitness does not always presently appear. Hence it is that men, who, from the notion of an infinitely perfect Being, are convinced it must be so, even when they are not able to make it out plainly to themselves, entertain a sort of longing for eternity: for they are sensible, that the short space of life is not sufficient for them to find out the ways of their Maker, and cannot but perceive, at least confusedly, that such a life as this does not fully answer the wise designs of the supreme Governor of the world. See Peters on Job, p. 418, &c.

Ver. 14. *Whatsoever God doeth*] *Whatsoever God shall do, the same shall be for ever.* Desvœux.

Ver. 15. *That which hath been, is now, &c.*] The second observation which serves also for a transition to the consequences to be inferred from the whole, and which is contained in ver. 12—15. is, that God directs all the events wherein we are any way concerned, by an unvariable providence. A constant and powerful inducement indeed to fear God!

Ver. 16. *And moreover, I saw, &c.*] *Moreover, I observed under the sun the place of judgment; there I saw iniquity: and the place of righteousness; there I saw wickedness.—Ver. 17. Then I concluded in my heart, &c.* There is a strong opposition observable in this passage between *iniquity and judgment, &c.* And farther, the expression, *under the sun*, seems to be employed by way of opposition to something which is not immediately mentioned: and what can more properly be opposed to *a place of judgment under the sun*, or

in this world, than a place of judgment out of this world? Now such a place is really hinted at, and the opposition thereby completed in the next verse, by the mention of a time appointed by the Almighty to reverse the wrong judgments, passed in this world, both upon the righteous and upon the wicked. We have in these two verses the first *corollary*: notwithstanding the constant intervention of the Almighty in human affairs, such constant disorders are observable in the administration of justice in this world, that the fate of the innocent and that of the guilty are often, as it were, interchanged. But then, since God hath appointed, as was said before, a proper time for every thing, there must be one for the reversal of wrong sentences passed upon men by wicked judges; and I concluded that God shall, one day or other, take the judgment to himself, and set every thing right. Thus his conduct shall be fully justified in the event.

Ver. 18. *That God might manifest, &c.*] *That I should assert God, and see that they themselves are beasts.* Desvœux.

Ver. 21. *Who knoweth the spirit of man, &c.*] *Who knoweth the breath of the sons of man, whether it ascendeth upward; and the breath of a brute, whether it descendeth downward to the earth?* We have, from ver. 18. to the present, the 2d *corollary*. The being of a God, his attributes, and supreme sway of his providence, are clearly evinced from the very complication of human affairs, which none but an infinite understanding could ever prevent from falling into an irretrievable confusion. But the higher we rise in our conceptions of that great Being, the lower we must descend in the notions that we have of our own worth and dignity; for our so-much-boasted-of reason, when left to itself, is incapable of ascertaining a difference in men's favour with respect to a future dispensation between themselves, and what they call the brutish part of the creation. "So dark and intricate are the ways of Providence in this world!"—By this interpretation the passage

22 ¶ Wherefore I perceive that *there is* nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that *is* his portion: for

who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?

is sufficiently vindicated from any suspicion of the Sadducean heresy. The only point insisted on, and for which no philosopher who is free from prejudice will think it worth his while to quarrel with Solomon, is, that the difference between the fate of brutes and men is not to be known with certainty by the mere light of reason, unassisted by revelation. Now this differs from the heresy above-mentioned as much as the humble confession of one who owns himself to be in the dark, does from the assuming assertion of another who talks of nothing but full evidence and certainty. See the text fully justified in this light in Desvœux's Dissertation on the Ecclesiastes, p. 53, 54. We may just observe, that Tremellius renders the beginning of the 18th verse, *I said in my heart, according to human reason, &c.* See Peters on Job, p. 323.

Ver. 22. *Wherefore I perceive, &c.*] *Lastly, I perceived that there is nothing better in the labour of man, than that he should receive pleasure from it; because this is his portion: for who shall bring him back to enjoy what shall be hereafter?* This verse contains the third *corollary*. Since it is not given to men to see what happens after their death, much less to enjoy it, the portion allotted to them by God Almighty can be nothing else in this world than present enjoyment. Consequently we must look to a future life for that enjoyment which is durable, which is eternal.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, In a variety of particulars he proceeds to confirm the general truth, that *to every thing there is a season*.

1. *There is a time to be born, and a time to die*: every one who is born to natural life, must pass through death: What an argument to animate us to a secure, a happy resurrection!

2. *A time to plant*; either a tree; or an immortal soul, by the ministry of the word; or a nation, by divine Providence; *and a time to pluck up that which is planted*; either the tree which is past bearing, or fruitless; or the soul, when its work is done, and it is ripe for glory; or when twice dead, and fuel for the flames of hell; or a nation, when the measure of its iniquities is full, Jer. xviii. 7—10.

3. *A time to kill*; by divine judgments, or the sword of war, or the sentence of the civil magistrate; *and a time to heal*, when the affairs of a kingdom, which seemed hastening to ruin, are retrieved.

4. *A time to break down*; the strength of the body, or the prosperity of a family or nation; *and a time to build up*: When our private affairs seem most desperate, and the church of God reduced to the most abject state, Jehovah can, as of old, revive the stones of his temple, out of the dust, and bring his faithful ones to prosperity and glory.

5. *A time to weep and mourn*; when our own, our friends, or the church's afflictions, call forth our tears; *and a time to laugh and dance*, when God, bestowing prosperity on our bodies and souls, and on his Zion, requires us to serve him with gladness of heart.

6. *A time to cast away stones*; when proud palaces and

wicked cities are levelled to the ground; *and a time to gather stones together*, when God raiseth the poor from the dust, and giveth them cities to dwell in.

7. *A time to embrace*; with conjugal affection, the wife of our bosom, or with warm affection the friend of our heart: *and a time to refrain*; by choice, for a season, to give ourselves to prayer, see 1 Cor. vii. 3—5.; or by necessity, when separated from those who are dear to us, through business, or in times of trouble and persecution.

8. *A time to get*; when God's providence blesses, and we enjoy the most favourable opportunities of enriching ourselves with temporal or spiritual good things; *and a time to lose*, when unforeseen events deprive us of our worldly substance.

9. *A time to keep*; when our increasing families call for an increasing provision, or when in peace we are permitted to enjoy our possessions; *and a time to cast away*, when by God's gift our abundance enables us to supply the wants of the poor; or, for the testimony of a good conscience, we are called upon to suffer the loss of all things.

10. *A time to rend*; our garments, in token of deep mourning, or in detestation of some atrocious wickedness; *and a time to sew*, when the cause of our sorrow is removed.

11. *A time to keep silence*; under afflictive providences, dumb before God, not daring to utter a murmuring word; or in the presence of the wicked, when sometimes it is best to refrain even from God's word, nor cast our pearls before swine: *and a time to speak*, when duty calls for our boldness in the cause of God and truth, and true prudence dictates the fit season and proper manner.

12. *A time to love*; when faithful friendship and mutual regard engage our affections; *and a time to hate*, when those who behave unfavourably forfeit our regard, and oblige us to treat them with distance, and shun their company.

13. *A time of war*; in a just cause, when a nation's wrongs cannot be otherwise redressed; or during our whole lives, whilst our spiritual warfare lasts; *and a time of peace*, when the end for which the war was undertaken is answered; or at death, when the faithful believer will enter into eternal rest and peace.

Finally, As the inference from this view of the mutable and changing state of the things in which we are engaged, he concludes the unprofitableness and vanity of all our pursuits.—No possession is sure to us for an hour; and, instead of expecting our happiness in any creature, we should regard these labours rather as a part of the curse denounced on the first man's sin, and that God designs, as the word signifies, *to afflict and humble us thereby*. Note; (1.) This world is not our rest: it was never designed to be so. Man is born in it to sorrow and trouble, as the sparks fly upwards. (2.) Our curse of labour may be made eventually our mercy, as it prevents us from that idleness which would be highly dangerous to our souls, and serves to excite greater longings after that better world, *where there remaineth a rest for the people of God*.

2dly, In all the changes and vicissitudes that we meet with

## C H A P. IV.

*Vanity is increased unto men by oppression, by envy, by idleness, by covetousness, by solitariness, by wilfulness.*

**S**O I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun:

and behold the tears of *such as were* oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors *there was* power; but they had no comforter.

2 Wherefore I praised the dead which are

with in this vain world, God's suffering, permissive, or appointing will must be continually regarded.

1. We must rest assured, that he doth all things well. *He hath made every thing beautiful in his time*: all the variety in nature, and the turns of Providence, however some things may seem to us undesirable, disjointed, useless, or afflictive, yet are connected in the greatest beauty and harmony, and conspire together to advance God's glory, and to promote the good of those who love him. *He hath set the world in their heart*; expanded the volume of nature for our observation; yet, such is the darkness of our fallen minds, *that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end*. We know at best but in part, and the shallow line of human reason cannot fathom the abyss of his providences. But whatever veil now covers the deep things of God, it will shortly be done away: though we know not now, the faithful shall know hereafter, and for ever admire and adore, the perfection, excellence, and beauty of all his works and ways in creation, providence, and grace, and not a flaw to be found.

2. We must cheerfully acquiesce in our state, whatever it be, and set ourselves diligently to discharge the duties thereof.

[1.] *To rejoice* in our portion, whether it be less or more, knowing that it exceeds all that we deserve: not fordidly covetous, through fear of future want, to spare what we at present need, but eat and drink what God hath given. And this also must come from his gift, who only can bestow on us the heart to enjoy the good of our labour, without which we may be discontented, unthankful, and pine in the midst of plenty.

[2.] *To do good in this life*. The time is short, and we should give the greater diligence to improve it; employ the portion which God bestows, in all those works of faith, and labours of love, which our relations in life, the household of faith, and the necessitous in general, call for at our hands; and this is the way to *do good* to ourselves; for what is thus laid out will turn to our best account hereafter.

[3.] *To submit entirely to the divine disposals*, and that because necessity is laid upon us. *Whatever God doeth, it shall be for ever*. to quarrel with his dispensation, is but to kick against the pricks. His determinations cannot be reversed or altered: nor should we wish it, if we knew the wisdom and goodness of all his works and ways. *Nothing can be put to it*, for his work is perfect; *nor any thing taken from it*; there is nothing superfluous, or unnecessary, but the whole complete in excellence; so that it is our highest interest, as well as duty, to say, *Thy will be done*.

[4.] *To fear God*; all his dispensations of providence and grace being designed to affect our souls with greater reverence of his majesty, to engage us to trust him in every emergency, to fear offending, to be solicitous to please him, and to quicken us in the more diligent use of every

means of grace, that we may be enabled for all he doth command, and prepared for whatever he hath prepared for us.

[5.] *To acknowledge the steadiness and uniformity of the divine government*. The ordinances of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars, perform the same revolutions; the events of providence are exact, similar; *that which hath been, is now*. Nor may we think the world fuller of crosses or of sin than formerly: *that which is to be, hath already been*: the same changes will still mark the rolling years; and *God requireth that which is past*, repeats what he had done before. Let us not, therefore, think our lot hard, or our trials uncommon: in adversity, hope for such a change as Job experienced; in prosperity, rejoice with trembling; and in every state remember the solemn account of our behaviour in it, which we must one day make. This is wisdom.

3dly, A wicked as well as vain world is this in which we live, and, because of wickedness, made subject to vanity. Left destitute of the fear of God, the whole would be a scene of misery and wretchedness; and it had been preferable to have been a beast, rather than a man.

1. The world is full of oppression: even in the seat of judgment, where righteousness should influence every decree, iniquity often reigns. This Solomon had remarked in his observations on other nations, and perhaps, notwithstanding all his care, could not expel from his own dominions.

2. However judgment may be perverted by men, there is a day coming, when all shall be revised, and justice ministered to every man according to truth; when God will vindicate the cause of the righteous, and condemn the wicked; and the unjust judges must be called to a terrible account for their unrighteous decrees. The time is advancing; it is near: let such as are oppressed with wrong patiently wait for it: *the eternal Judge standeth before the door*.

3. God, in all his dispensations towards the sons of men in their present state, designs to manifest them; either to separate them, the righteous from the wicked, or, *that they might clear God*, as the word may be rendered, whose ways are all equal, but ours unequal; (for we have only ourselves to blame;) or, to shew us what a creature man is when left to himself, even like *the beasts*, stupid, untractable, cruel, and brutish in his appetites. Men and beasts are liable to the same disorders, accidents, and calamities, and are supported by the same providential care. They have the same animal life, preserved by the breath which passes through their nostrils; they lie down together in the dust; (and man, alike subject to vanity, knows no pre-eminence there;) the same putrid corpses, and returning to the same earth from whence they came. Nor is there any visible difference after death concerning their spirits; for, though by the light of revelation we are told that

man

already dead, more than the living which are yet alive.

3 Yea, better *is he* than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.

4 ¶ Again, I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This *is* also vanity and vexation of spirit.

5 ¶ The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh.

6 ¶ Better *is* an handful *with* quietness, than both the hands full, *with* travail and vexation of spirit.

7 ¶ Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun.

8 There is one *alone*, and *there is* not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother:

yet *is there* no end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither *saitb he*, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This *is* also vanity, yea, it *is* a sore travail.

9 ¶ Two *are* better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.

10 For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him *that is* alone when he falleth; for *he bath* not another to help him up.

11 Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm *alone*?

12 And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

13 ¶ Better *is* a poor and a wise child, than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished.

man is immortal; that his soul returns to God to be judged, and receive his eternal doom; yet, who *knoweth this*? It is not the object of our senses; and I question, whether the reason of fallen man would ever have come to the knowledge of his own immortality, unassisted by traditionary revelation or the scriptures: certain it is, however, that multitudes consider not the difference; they live and die as the beasts that perish.

4. The conclusion that he draws from these observations is, that, since such is man's present state of wretchedness and vanity, his highest wisdom is to make the best use he can of what he now possesses, for *that is his portion*; and since he must quickly leave the earth, and all the things therein, and knows not how his successors may prove, he should wisely lay out his substance as is most comfortable to himself, most to God's glory, and most beneficial to mankind. The whole may teach us, (1.) A very humbling lesson of our present state, and how little reason we have to be proud of any bodily accomplishments, when the putrid carcase of a beast shall be shortly just as amiable. (2.) Since it is in our souls that the great difference lies, to make the concerns of them our greatest care. It is a trivial consideration how we fare in time; the grand object is, to secure our well-being in eternity.

CHAP. IV.

Ver. 1. *So I returned, and considered, &c.*] I considered again, and I observed. See on chap. ii. 11.

Ver. 3. *Yea, better is he than both they*] Nay, I say he is happier than either, who is not yet come to life, who hath not seen the misery that prevaileth under the sun. Desvœux.

Ver. 4. *Again, I considered all travail*] I observed again all the labour, nay, all the most successful work, that for this, &c.

Ver. 5, 6. *The fool foldeth his hands, &c.*] The fool, folding his hands together, and eating his own flesh, saith, Better is the palm of one hand full of rest, than both the hands full of

work, and that which goes with the wind. Desvœux; who observes, that metaphors derived from images which are not familiar to us, and which on that account may at first appear almost unintelligible, are sometimes easily understood, when you compare them with the context: thus the expression, *eating his own flesh*, does not immediately raise in the mind the distinct idea of any particular passion; but when you see envy mentioned just before, and consider the thread of the argument, there can scarcely remain any doubt but that Solomon intended to describe an envious and idle man. So Iliad, i. ver. 243. Agamemnon is represented as *tearing his own heart* on account of a fault in which he is still resolved to persevere. So Ovid, describing Envy, says, *Suppliciumque suum est*, "She is her own torment;" and in some lines ascribed to Virgil it is said of her, that "She drinks up the whole blood while *devouring the limbs*;" *totum bibit artubus cruorem*; which he explains afterwards, by saying, that the more envy a man has in his heart, the greater torment he is to himself: *Sibi pœna semper ipse est*.

Ver. 8. *There is one alone, and there is not a second*] Here is a man who hath no second, neither son nor brother; yet he puts no end to his labour: neither, &c.

Ver. 9. *Because they have a good reward*] Because they have a better reward for their common labour.

Ver. 12. *And if one prevail against him, &c.*] And though one should be strong, the two will make a stand against him; for a three-stringed cord shall not quickly be broken. Desvœux. Houbigant renders it, *But if one should be circumvented, and they two be present [to assist him] then the three-fold cord will not easily be broken.*

Ver. 13. *Better is a poor and a wise child, &c.*] Better is the experienced and wise son, than the old, &c. Desvœux; who has shewn, that the word *יָדוּן* *miken*, from the root *יָדָן* *saken*, properly signifies *experienced*; and by this interpretation the passage appears with new beauties; for what can be more striking than the title which the *wise son*,

14 For out of prison he cometh to reign; whereas also *he that is* born in his kingdom becometh poor.

15 I considered all the living which walk under the sun, with the second child that shall stand up in his stead.

16 *There is* no end of all the people, *even* of all that have been before them: they also that come after shall not rejoice in him. Surely this also *is* vanity and vexation of spirit.

son, the young prince here spoken of, has to the preference given him above his father, when he is represented as possessed in his youth of those very qualifications, experience and wisdom, which are generally looked upon as the properties of old age? And what could make his worth more conspicuous than the opposition of the old king's faults in those very respects? See chap. x. 6, 7. 16, 17.

Ver. 14. *For out of prison he cometh to reign*] Desvœux connects this with the preceding verse thus; *Because he came from among the slaves to be a king, and because he was born poor in the kingdom which became his.* Bishop Warburton is of opinion, that these verses allude to some fact out of Judea, which is unknown to us.

Ver. 15, 16. *I considered all the living*] *I saw all the living eager to walk under the sun, with the second son who should succeed him.*—Ver. 16. *No end of all the people! of all that resorted to them! Yet they who shall come after will have no reason to be glad of that successor.* I do not find, says Desvœux, that the interpreters have taken any notice of the phrase, *walking under the sun with a man in power*, as of a figurative expression. Nay, our version turns it so as to make it a mere repetition of *all the living*; yet this expression is the more remarkable here, as it is followed in the next verse by another, which, from a comparison between Gen. v. 22. 24. and xvii. 1. appears to be synonymous to it, in a metaphorical sense; I mean to be *before the face*, *לפני* *lipnei*, which I have rendered *resorted*. From the context, the idea must be *paying one's court*, or something to that purpose; and the image alluded to, is that of a man who does not value the inconvenience, great as it was in the climate of Judea, of walking in a place exposed to the scorching heat of the sun, provided he may by so doing testify his regard for the person whom he attends. This notion may be confirmed by the known signification of the phrase, *walking with God*, (see Gen. as above,) which the LXX very properly have rendered *συναπέρνοσ*. This chapter contains the fourth and last proof, brought to support the first general proposition, which is taken from the wrong use which men, considered with respect to the duties and particular circumstances of social life, make of opportunities which might be turned to their private advantage, or to that of the public; whether it be owing to their wickedness, folly, or supineness. The particular instances are these: I. The great and powerful, instead of relieving those who suffer wrong, support one another in their oppressive schemes; so that the oppressed have no one to wipe off their tears; ver. 1.—II. A man who is industrious, and applieth his labour well, is sure to attract the envy of those whose interest should rather prompt them to encourage him, and to improve by his example; ver. 4.—III. The idler envies the prosperity and plenty enjoyed by the industrious, while

his aversion to trouble and labour makes him choose poverty rather than abundance; whereas he ought to rest satisfied in that state which is the natural consequence of the way of life that he chooses; ver. 5, 6.—IV. As the character of the idler was opposed to that of the industrious man, so another character is now introduced in opposition to that of the idler; viz. the character of an indefatigable covetous man, who, having nobody to share his fortune with, cannot resolve to leave off heaping up riches, and quietly to enjoy what he has already acquired, or take some one in partnership with him. He is fully convinced of the advantages resulting from a social life, and of the inconveniences to which the lonesome life that he leads is unavoidably subject. Yet he will not avail himself of those advantages, or avoid these dreadful inconveniences, at the expence of admitting another into a share of that plenty which he himself does not enjoy, although he possesses it: ver. 7—12.—V. The next instance is, that of the regard which is generally paid to dignities and places, rather than to real worth and merit; whereby virtue and public spirit lie under great discouragement.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, He had before considered the case of proud oppressors, and foreseen their judgment: here he turns his eyes to the oppressed, and bewails their misery.

1. Their condition is deplorable, and often helpless; for, here, might often overcomes right. The tears of the poor, the orphan, the persecuted, cry out against their severe and covetous masters, their treacherous guardians, and tyrannical governors; *and they have no comforter*, few caring to expose themselves in the cause of injured innocence, especially where the *power in the hands of oppressors* makes it dangerous to oppose the iniquitous proceedings, or even to shew compassion to those who suffer under their wickedness.

2. The judgment which he formed concerning this state of oppression is, that death itself were preferable to such a continued scene of misery; and never to have had a being, more desirable, than merely to come thus into the world, to see *the evil that is done under the sun*, and suffer. And this is spoken as the conclusion of sense without respect to a future state; for else, as it is a great truth that they who in Christ have finished their warfare, are in a much more desirable state than those militant saints, who still bear the burden and heat of the day; so to have a being, however miserable upon earth, can never make a good man wish he had never been born, since God is glorified in his sufferings, and an eternity of happiness is before him. Nor ought any man to quarrel with his being, because of the evil that he sees or feels; it is his own fault, if the issue be not for his good.

2dly, The more he considers, the more the conviction



## CHAP. V.

*Vanities in divine service, in murmuring against oppression, and in riches. Joy in prosperity is the gift of God.*

**K**EEP thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to

hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.

2 Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter *any* thing before God: for God *is* in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.

is evident, that all beneath the sun is vanity and vexation of spirit.

1. Is a man industrious, ingenious, and successful? immediately he is the butt of envy. Though with hard travail he laboured in the school of learning, or in the business of life, and all the steps, he took were unexceptionably upright; yet, such is the vile nature of fallen man, that, instead of rendering the deserved praise, and rejoicing in his neighbour's prosperity and honour, his evil eye is upon him, and his malignant tongue too often ready to traduce his merit. Even his good works shall frequently draw upon him the bitterest hatred, 1 John, iii. 12. But, though men make us so ungrateful a return, we must not be discouraged: we shall have praise of God, and that will overbalance the world's envy and hatred.

2. The opposite conduct is yet attended with greater vexation. Instead of being industrious, and to avoid being envied, *the fool*, the slothful man, *folds his hands together*; and the consequence of such idleness is, that *he eateth his own flesh*, emaciated through hunger and famished for want, or wasting the substance that his family should inherit; and suggests, in vindication of himself, that a little with ease, and without labour, is better than abundance which must be hardly earned; as if sloth were quietness, diligent industry intolerable toil, and indolence contentment. Or the words may express the wife man's judgment, directing us to the golden mean between reproachful indolence and restless labour and anxiety; for the moderate gains of honest industry, enjoyed with contentment, are an infinitely more satisfactory portion, than the exorbitant wealth which is gotten with hard labour, kept with anxiety, and embittered in the using.

3dly, He that walks about under the sun, will ever be observing more and more of the vanity of the creature; a fresh instance of which is produced,

1. In the character of the miser, who, though he has none but himself to provide for, and neither *child nor brother* to whom he may bequeath the riches that he has amassed, yet is indefatigable in his labours, insatiable in his desires of wealth, shuns the joys of society, nay, grudges the necessities that his own body requires, because of the expence; and never once considers, (so wretchedly is he infatuated,) *for whom do I labour?* neither for the glory of God, my own comfort, nor the good of others; perhaps, for those who will never thank me, and will squander in extravagance and thoughtless dissipation the fruits of so much toil and care. This is indeed a *vanity and sore travail*, the folly as great as the sin.

2. The wife man shews how much preferable society and the enjoyment of our labours is, to this unnatural solitude and niggardliness. The comforts and advantages of marriage and friendship amply overpay us for all they

cost. *Two are better than one*; more happy than they could be separate; *because they have a good reward for their labour*; enjoy mutual assistance and counsel, and communicate mutual pleasure. If one falls as they travel, the other is ready to lend his helping hand; if into errors of sin, a faithful friend will seek to restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; if into sorrow, he will be near to comfort him: *But woe to him that is alone when he faileth*: where he lies, he is in danger of being lost: Again, *If two lie together, they have heat*; which is true spiritually, for nothing warms the heart more than Christian fellowship, as the disciples going to Emmaus experienced; while solitude, instead of raising our affections, as secluded monks and hermits boast, removes us from one of the most effectual means of heavenly-mindedness. As useful will society be in time of danger: the robber will attack a single traveller, who dares not attempt it when he has company. Satan thus beset Eve, and false teachers thus single out their prey; but a faithful friend is a guard against temptation, which, even by the communication of it, is sometimes overcome; and a *threefold cord*, where Christians unite in society, and Christ is in the midst of them, *is not quickly broken*; for they have their great High-Priest and their King for their protector.

4thly, Crowns seem the most substantial goods, yet they are held by a precarious tenure, and cumbered with much vanity and vexation of spirit.

1. If they be on the heads of the foolish, they totter; for, though inherited by descent, and worn to old age, yet, if the king, whose age should add veneration and weight to his dignity, be *foolish*, unable to manage the reins of government, and perverse and conceited withal, who will not bear to be *almonished*, nor advise with the counsellors of wisdom; he *becometh poor*, ruins his subjects, or is conquered by invaders. So that even a child, though poor and low in the world, yet, if wise, is a more respectable personage, and may rise from the dunghill, as Joseph from the dungeon to the highest honours; while the other is perhaps hurled from the summit of dignity and affluence to the depths of infamy and want.

2. The very fickleness of the people will sometimes be enough to bring about revolutions in the state. Solomon observed in his researches, that the rising sun was usually adored; and the successor more caressed than the reigning monarch. They are in haste to see his child stand up in his stead, and think to alter their condition for the better in transferring the crown from the father to the son. Thus without end are they restlessly given to change, as those who went before them were, and those who come after them will be; dissatisfied quickly with their new king, and willing to pull him down to-day, whom they set up yesterday. And it cannot but afford much grief

3 For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.

4 When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for *he hath* no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed.

5 Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.

6 Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?

7 For in the multitude of dreams and many words, *there are* also divers vanities: but fear thou God.

#### CHAP. V.

*Ver. 1. And be more ready to hear, &c.] For, to be ready to obey is a better sacrifice than the gift of fools; because they know not when they do evil.* It is plain that Solomon intended to oppose the course which he advises us to take when we go into the house of God, to that which is generally pursued by fools, or those who are ignorant of divine knowledge: but the beauty of that opposition is almost entirely lost in modern versions, through the turn given to the whole sentence. By means of the translation here offered, two sorts of sacrifices are distinctly opposed to each other; namely, a sacrifice of obedience, wherein the most essential part of the wise man's worship consists; and a sacrifice of oblations, wherewith the ignorant foolishly imagines he can render to God all that he owes him. The *paronomasia* in the original might, perhaps, be thus preserved in our language; "An offering of obedience is a sacrifice preferable to the gift of fools." The particulars hitherto alleged in support of the main argument may be viewed in very different lights, as appears by the apprehensions of those who would exclude this book from the canon: though they are really calculated to instil the fear of God, and a thorough reverence of him into men's hearts; yet some might imagine that they are apt to produce an effect directly contrary to that respect and reverence which we owe to the Almighty: the sacred orator, being aware of this, thought proper here to insert a few admonitions concerning that respect and reverence. I. Though some may be apt to infer from the obvious vanity of every thing in this world, that God does not concern himself about human affairs; yet never go into his house only for form's sake. II. When you resort thither, be mindful of your duty to him; and remember, that such a continual watchfulness over yourself as the ignorant and giddy are not capable of, is more acceptable to him than any form of outward worship.

*Ver. 3. For a dream cometh through the multitude of business.] For as a dream bringeth abundance of trouble, so does the voice of an ignorant [or unguarded] man abundance of words.* Desvoeux.

*Ver. 4. For he hath no pleasure in fools.] For it is the property of fools to have no fixed will.* Desvoeux. The Hebrew is, *For no will in fools;* and so the LXX render it.

*Ver. 6. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin, &c.] Let not thy mouth weakly excuse thee to no purpose, and do not say before the messenger [who is sent to require from thee what thou hast vowed] it was a mistake.* Solomon advises any man who has made a vow to accomplish it, and not to look for excuses and pretences in order to avoid paying that debt. The motive he suggests to support this advice, viz. that the non-payment might be the means of kindling God's wrath against a perjured man, is very proper; for there was a special law (Deut. xxiii. 21.) against any one who was slack in paying a vow; and such a man was particularly threatened with the anger of the Almighty. Every critic knows, that the word *angel* is literally the name of an office. מלאך, *malak*, is as often applied to man, as to those spiritual beings whom we call *angels*, and means a messenger. Now, as the priest kept a servant to levy their share out of the offering of the people, 1 Sam. ii. 13 - 16. and as they were greatly concerned in seeing the vows punctually paid; it is probable that they kept messengers also to go and summon those whom they knew to have vowed any thing the payment of which would be profitable to them. I do not know but that an employment which we find in after-times established in the synagogues, without knowing when it began, might be the same in the main which is here alluded to. The Jews, who scrupled to handle money on the sabbath-day, used to bind themselves on that day to an officer sent by the rulers of the synagogue, to give such or such sum for alms, and that officer received the sum from them the next day. This conjecture is the more probable, as that officer, who was the *chazan*, or minister of the synagogue, is sometimes styled שליח צבור, *shaliach tshibur*, the messenger of the synagogue. Desvoeux. Archbishop Tillotson understands the passage in the general acceptation. The reader will find his sense of it in his 75th Sermon, on good angels.

*Ver. 7. For in the multitude of dreams, &c.] From the 2d to this verse we have Solomon's second admonition to this purpose. Let no one rashly call by oaths upon Him who dwells in heaven, to be a witness of what passeth upon earth; and, to avoid the occasions of swearing, be sparing of your words; for the voice of a giddy man is like a dream. His many words are as vain, when you come to examine them, as the uneasiness brought on you by a dream, which vanisheth away when you awake: ver. 3. Yet if you have vowed or promised any thing with an oath, do not be dilatory in performing it. You were free, and might have dispensed with binding yourself in that manner; but after taking such an engagement upon you, not to discharge it is the behaviour of an imprudent man, who does not know his own will: ver. 4. Do not aggravate*

8 ¶ If thou seeſt the oppreſſion of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and juſtice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for *be that is* higher than the higheſt, regardeth; and *there be* higher than they.

9 ¶ Moreover the profit of the earth is for all: the king *himſelf* is ſerved by the field.

10 He that loveth ſilver ſhall not be ſatisfied with ſilver; nor he that loveth abundance with increaſe: this *is* alſo vanity.

11 When goods increaſe, they are increaſed that eat them: and what good *is there* to the owners thereof, ſaving the beholding of *them* with their eyes?

12 The ſleep of a labouring man *is* ſweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abun-

dance of the rich will not ſuffer him to ſleep.

13 There is a fore evil *which* I have ſeen under the ſun, *namely*, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.

14 But thoſe riches periſh by evil travail: and he begetteth a ſon, and *there is* nothing in his hand.

15 As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked ſhall he return to go as he came, and ſhall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand.

16 And this alſo *is* a fore evil, *that* in all points as he came, ſo ſhall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?

17 All his days alſo he eateth in darkneſs,

vate the crime by denying the vow when you are required to pay it. Diſcharge your engagement, and do not provoke God to anger, who is able to puniſh you with the utmoſt ſeverity. The words or arguments which you might think of uſing to juſtify yourſelf, are as vain as dreams. Therefore do not attempt it; but fear him to whom you are really bound, notwithstanding all the evaſions you may have recourſe to: ver. 5—7.

Ver. 8. *Marvel not at the matter*] *Marvel not at ſuch a diſpenſation of Providence.* Delvœux.

Ver. 9. *The king himſelf, &c.*] *The king is ſerved on account of the field.* Delvœux. Houbigant renders the verſe, *And when theſe things are ſo, it is advantageous for the land that there be a king who may deſtroy the oppreſſor of the province.* In this and the foregoing verſe is contained the third admonition. Let no one look upon the injuſtices which men in power are guilty of, to the prejudice of the poor, as a diſparagement of Providence; for one who is above—not the governors of provinces only, but likewise above the monarchs from whom they derive their authority, keeps them all in reſerve for the day of retribution; and, as a token of his firm reſolve to diſtribute juſtice to all with the moſt perfect equality, he has ſo ordered things in this world, that, after all incroachments and extortions of the powerful, there is a common fund remaining for the ſupport of all, without diſtinction, and for the ſake of which chiefly the kings themſelves are ſerved. For what inducement have other men to ſubject themſelves to the king's authority, but that under his protection the land may be properly improved and cultivated?

Ver. 10. *He that loveth abundance, &c.*] *And he who loveth numerous company, no income ſhall be ſufficient for him.* See Delvœux, p. 281.

Ver. 12. *The ſleep of a labouring man, &c.*] The ſixth and laſt inſtance, wherewith this fourth proof, and the whole argument in ſupport of the firſt propoſition, is concluded, is that of the inſufficiency of riches to make a man happy, whether he loves money for the ſake of money, or is fond of it only as it affords him opportunities of ſpending it in feaſts and entertainments: ver. 10. This is made the more

conſpicuous by the oppoſite inſtance of the poor labourer. Covetouſneſs is inſatiable: yet what is acquired does not turn to the perſonal advantage of the owner, who does not become capable of conſuming more in proportion as he increaſes in wealth; but muſt ſee his income ſpent, either by the company he delights in, or at leaſt by his ſervants and other dependants. As for himſelf, he really fares worſe than a ploughman who ſleeps ſound, even after eating more than the unexerciſed conſtitution of the rich man will bear. Whereas the wealthy man is often deprived of the ſweets of ſleep by the natural conſequences of his gluttony: ver. 11, 12.

Ver. 13. *There is a fore evil*] *There is an aggravation of evil:* ſee ver. 16. and ch. vi. 2. This verſe contains the ſecond general propoſition. Earthly goods, and whatever we can acquire by our utmoſt trouble and labour in this world, are ſo far from making us laſtingly happy, that they may be looked upon even as real obſtacles to our eaſe, quiet, and tranquillity. The proofs of this propoſition, we here ſubjoin, in the ſame analytical manner as on ch. i. 2, 3.

Chap. Verſe.

v. 13.

14—17.

vi. 18—2.

3—6.

7—9.

10, 11.

II. Propoſition.

1ſt Proof. Inſtability of riches.

2d Proof. Inſufficiency of riches to make one happy.

Corollary. The fate of an abortive is preferable, upon the whole, to that of one who lives without enjoying life.

3d Proof. Men's inſatiableneſs.

General concluſion from the firſt and ſecond propoſitions.

Ver. 14. *But thoſe riches periſh*] *For thoſe very riches periſh, notwithstanding the conſtant trouble taken to preſerve them; a man beget a ſon, and not any thing in his hand.*

Ver. 17. *All his days alſo he eateth*] The firſt proof of the ſecond propoſition is comprized in ver. 14—17. and is taken from the inſtability of riches. The longer one has

and *he hath* much sorrow and wrath with his sickness.

18 ¶ Behold *that* which I have seen: *it is* good and comely *for one* to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for *it is* his portion.

19 Every man also to whom God hath

given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; *this is* the gift of God.

20 For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth *him* in the joy of his heart.

been in possession of a plentiful fortune, the more it vexes him to see it, notwithstanding all his assiduity and care, dwindling away to nothing; and to leave his son, whom he had lived in hopes of leaving a rich heir, reduced to poverty. Yet this is a misfortune, against which no man can be certainly guarded, although he himself carries nothing away of what he has heaped up, and passes the remainder of his days, after the sinking of his fortune, in affliction, and continual repining at his present situation.

*Ver. 18. Behold that which I have seen, &c.] Behold that which I have observed to be good; that which I have observed to be proper, &c.*

*Ver. 19, 20. Every man also to whom, &c.] And indeed any man, to whom God, &c. (for this very thing is certainly a gift of God) ver. 20. will not much remember the days of his life. Solomon means to say, that time floweth unobserved by men who enjoy a constant prosperity. Now this, together with the pious reflection, that God is the author of such temporal blessings, is the very sense put by the LXX upon Solomon's words, Because God occupieth or taketh him in, or with the joy of his heart. Desvœux.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Since in the world all is vanity, the substantial good must be sought, and can only be found in the ways of godliness, in the worship and service of God. But even here we must beware of vanity in our approach to him, lest our very prayer be turned into sin. Solomon directs us, therefore, whither to go, *to the house of God*; and how to behave in the congregation, so as to profit thereby.

1. We must draw near with reverence and godly fear, jealous over our hearts, that our corrupt affections may be put off, our thoughts solemn and recollected, and our devotions heart-felt and sincere.

2. We must beware that we offer not *the sacrifice of fools*. The prayers of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord. While they think to recommend themselves to God by their pompous and hypocritical devotions, the services of the lip and knee, not of the heart, *they consider not that they do evil*; they deceive themselves, and insult the heart-searching God: or, *they know not but to do evil*; for to do good they have no knowledge. How many self-righteous formalists in the day of judgment will be astonished to see their very prayers and devotions, on which they trusted, rising up to their condemnation!

3. That we may not offer the sacrifice of fools, these necessary cautions are to be attended to.

[1.] We must be ready to hear God's word read and preached, that we may be instructed in the knowledge of his holy will, and directed how to serve him acceptably,

and worship him in spirit and in truth. *Note*; They who place all their dependance on the form of public prayer, and are inattentive to the word of God read, or expect no benefit from the gospel-*sermon* preached to them, are certainly self-deceivers, and strangers to the power of godliness.

[2.] We must not be rash with our mouth, nor our heart be hasty to utter any thing before God. Serious meditation must precede; the heart be engaged; the presence of God felt; a sense of our wants deep; and our words breathing the language of fervent desire. And the same may be said of speaking for God, as well as to him: the subject must be well-digested, and not the crude effusion of hasty lips.

[3.] Our words must be few, and fervent, rather than prolix tautology: not that when the heart is full, we are straitened; it is not the length of prayers, but the vain repetition and dry formality of them, which God condemns. And abundant reason there is for these cautions, if we consider God with whom we have to do, and our vanity and vileness before him. *He is in heaven, enthroned in glory and light inaccessible; omniscient, and almighty; the object of eternal adoration of saints and angels; and far exalted above all blessing and praise; and we are upon earth, worms and dust before him, yea, sinful dust and ashes, unworthy to open our polluted lips, or lift up our eyes to him. Highly profane and strangely ignorant would it be therefore in us, to be uttering a multitude of words before him, unmeaning, crude, and indigested, like the ravings of a dream which cometh through the multitude of business. In common conversation a fool is known by his talkativeness; but, to approach God with such noise and nonsense, is not only the foolishness of folly, but the height of impiety.*

2dly. From the service of prayer, the wise man passes on to vows, wherewith a man shall bind his soul.

1. We must be conscientious in fulfilling our vows. *Defer not to pay it*; precisely and punctually perform the engagement, and that without delay; for delays are dangerous, where the path of duty is evident. To play the fool with God, is to bring ruin on our souls; *for he will not be mocked, and hath no pleasure in fools*; abhors such lightness and falsehood. Therefore,

2. We should be cautious of making vows. However frequent under the law, they seem less suited to the gospel dispensation, and tend to ensnare the soul and bring it into bondage. *Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin*, by vowing what is evil, and not fit to be observed; or what, through the frailty of our nature, we are not likely to perform; lest too late we should be driven

CHAP. VI.

*The vanity of riches without use; of children, and of old age without riches. The vanity of sight, and wandering desires. The conclusion of vanities.*

**T**HERE is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men:

to a foolish and sinful excuse, and say before the angel, *It was an error*; before the great angel of the covenant, Christ Jesus. Nevertheless, the vows had better be repented of and broke, than kept, when contrary to the glory of God, or the good of our neighbour, or our own evident duty toward ourselves.

3. We must fear God, and that will prevent hasty words, and vain terrors from our dreams. They may be strange, confused, frightful, and often perplex the minds of the superstitious; but in general are no more to be regarded than the multitude of words in the mouth of a fool, which are not fit to be repeated. They who fear God, need fear nothing beside.

4. We may not question the equity of divine Providence, because of the injustice too commonly practised among men. It is a grievous and melancholy scene to behold the poor oppressed, and the form of law cloaking the most arbitrary and unrighteous decrees; but we must not therefore think that God has forsaken the earth. *Marvel not at the matter as strange, or at the will of God in permitting it; for he that is higher than the highest*, the omnipotent and eternal Judge, regardeth; observes the wickedness of the proud and the oppressor, and will reckon with them shortly, when every cause shall be revised at his bar. *And there be higher than they*; either superior courts, wherein appeals may be lodged; or the holy angels, the ministering spirits who wait on the heirs of salvation to defend them, and are the executioners of divine vengeance on their enemies; or the eternal Three, before whom the proudest and most exalted of the sons of men are less than nothing and vanity, more easily crushed than a moth under the finger.

3diy, Great riches, as well as all other things, however in general coveted, will be found a great vanity.

1. The earth affords enough for all, and agriculture is a noble employment, as it may be rendered, *the excellency of the earth above all things is this*; we can do much better without the merchant, than without the husbandman. *The king himself is served by the field*, with provisions for himself and his household: or, *is a servant to the field*, delights in husbandry, and counts it no disparagement to his dignity.

2. Tillage is a needful employment; and a decent profession, got by honest industry, desirable; but an inordinate love of money is highly criminal, and attended with much misery.

[1.] The desires are insatiable. He that hath much, would still have more, and is ever craving. The abundance possessed cannot satisfy; something still is wanted. Hunger cannot be fed on gold; much less the soul find rest in this shining vanity.

2 A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it: this is vanity, and it is an evil disease.

3 ¶ If a man beget an hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his

[2.] Great estates will be attended with great expences: as the wealth increases, so does the family, equipage, and retinue; and the owner has no other satisfaction of his affluence, than *the seeing it with his eyes*. He can but have food and raiment, and of that he had equally sufficient for himself when he had less. Indeed, to have it in our power to do good is a blessing; but when the heart is covetous, it gives a man only pain to see his substance in any way expended.

[3.] The servant who labours has, in some instances, the advantage. Sweet sleep closes his eyes; no indigestion disturbs his slumbers; no cares keep him waking; weary with toil he reposes, and rises refreshed and vigorous. Thus shall the weary but faithful believer rest, and awake with joy in a resurrection-day. But the master, gorged to satiety, with his stomach loaded, lies down and tosses restless and unquiet on his bed of down; or, filled with carking anxiety, and a world of business, his ruffled mind admits not the soft hand of sleep to close his eye-lids: or perhaps conscious guilt haunts him, and startles him with frightful dreams in broken slumbers.

[4.] Riches are often exceedingly hurtful to their owners: they tempt the robber and murderer; they afford opportunity to gratify every lawless appetite; puff up the mind usually with pride and security; through excess and luxury, bring diseases upon the body; and plunge men into divers foolish and hurtful lusts, which finally drown the soul in perdition and destruction: and *a fore evil* indeed is this!

[5.] Riches ill got, or ill used, soon perish by evil travail; trading beyond their capital, many have been ruined; by mismanagement, the greatest estate melts as snow before the sun; and God, in his providence, often blows upon the abundance of the wicked, and like a shadow it flees away. So that his son, who was to have inherited after him, finds himself a beggar, and worse off than if he had been born with no expectations, and taught to earn his own bread.

[6.] Riches cannot descend with men into the grave. Naked as they came from the womb, must they be carried to the tomb, and leave all their possessions behind them. *In all points as he came, so shall he go*; and if this be the case, *what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?* for as vain will riches then appear, and as unsatisfactory. *A fore evil* this to those who had taken up their rest below, and said to their soul, *Take thine ease*. Note; (1.) Though our bodies must return to the dust, whence they came, it is grievous indeed when the soul returns as it came, unrenewed and unholy: far better never to have been born, than thus to die. (2.) They who labour for their bodies merely

years to many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also *that* he have no burial; I say, *that* an uncomely birth is better than he.

4 For he cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darknes, and his name shall be covered with darknes.

5 Moreover he hath not seen the sun, nor known *any thing*: this hath more rest than the other.

6 Yea, though he live a thousand years twice *told*, yet hath he seen no good: do not all go to one place?

merely will find their fearful disappointment at last; while they who labour for their souls will carry all their riches with them.

[7.] Riches often make a man's days uncomfortable, as well as his death miserable. *All his days he eateth in darknes*, his carking cares prevent his enjoying his very meals; he grudges the expence, or his soul is utterly destitute of the divine light and love. *And he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness*; it is bad with him in health, and worse with him in sickness: he receives it not as the rod of fatherly chastisement, but feels the wrath which is in the visitation; quarrels with God's providence, grieves bitterly at the thought of leaving all behind him, and is shocked at the terrible apprehensions of death. Or, as the words may be rendered, *he is much angry*; a thousand causes of vexation daily arise to him from those around him; *and he hath sickness brought on him by his fretfulness and anxiety, and wrath at those about him*; discontented and peevish with them, however assiduous to wait upon him; or with God himself for having thus afflicted him; and this but aggravates his misery.

4thly, Solomon, in the view of the vanity of riches, makes the same conclusion *that* he had done before, chap. iii. 22. that the best use of them is, the moderate enjoyment of them, without starving ourselves with covetousness, or killing ourselves with labour and care. All our days it is good to rejoice in the fruit of our toils; *it is our portion* in this life, and cannot be enjoyed hereafter. The possessions themselves are God's gift; and therefore, in gratitude to the giver, to be used cheerfully: and the heart to do so he must give also; or else the possessors can have no comfort in them; and this will tend to make the days of our pilgrimage less tedious; whilst, in answer to our prayers, God is pleased to fill us with food and gladness, make us forget our labour and disappointments; and with thankfulness to him, and cheerfulness of heart, to hold on our faithful course, advancing to our journey's end in peace and comfort, till he at last admits us into his eternal rest.

#### CHAP. VI.

*Ver. 2. A man to whom God hath given, &c.]* From the 18th verse of the foregoing chapter to the present, we have the 2d proof of the 2d proposition, which is taken from the insufficiency of riches to give a man any real satisfaction, even though the actual possession of them should never be taken from him. It was observed before, (ch. iii. 12, 13. 22.) that the only advantage to be had from earthly acquisitions is present enjoyment. But it was remarked likewise, that this is the gift of God, and is not in any man's power, except it be given him from above. Now Solomon adds a further observation, which had been

already hinted at, chap. ii. 24. but not fully explained; viz. that possession and fruition are so far from being necessarily linked together, that the Supreme Dispenser of all things, as experience testifies, often grants the one without granting the other. And what is the use of riches to one who starves in the midst of plenty, but to torment him? Thus he might have been happier and less uneasy without riches, than he is with them; chap. v. 18—20. This observation, however, is set in a very strong light, by the opposition of the case of another man, to whom God Almighty granted both wealth and enjoyment. This man, indeed, has no cause to complain, or to reckon his days as if they were burdensome to him; but as he is indebted to God's liberality, and not to his own labour and industry, for the ease and happiness that he enjoys, his case is no objection to the general observation laid down in the present proposition. That observation, on the other hand, is strongly confirmed by the instance of the unhappy rich man; viz. that every thing in this world, when considered in itself, is vain, and rather fit to torment men's minds, than to give them any real satisfaction. chap. vi. 1, 2.

*Ver. 3. If a man beget] Though a man should beget an hundred children, and live many years; nay, though he should be a senator, on account of the days of his years; if he should not enjoy his prosperity, nor even get a burying-place for himself, I concluded an abortive is better than he.* Solomon's meaning, probably, is, that the man he speaks of, though not only a long-liver, but likewise a man of eminence on account of his age; a chief, a judge, or a senator, shall nevertheless be accounted miserable, if that be all the advantage that he gets from his longstay in this world. The word *קבורה*, *keburah*, which we render *burial*, occurs in thirteen places of Scripture beside the present, and in every one of them means a *burying-place*, and not the action of burying; nor does the notion of burial agree with the context: For Solomon speaks of a man who is alive yet; since *he shall depart in darknes*, (see the next verse;) and whose misfortune, of consequence, cannot be aggravated by his not being buried. To what purpose then is a burying-place mentioned? I answer, that it was customary for people in easy circumstances to provide a burying-place for themselves and their family: Therefore, as the Arabic and Chaldee have well expressed it, it must be a proof of a man's dying in narrow circumstances, and not having enjoyed his fortune long, if ever he had any, that he has not provided such a place, a *house of burial*. See 2 Kings xxiii, 6. and *Deveux*.

*Ver. 4. For he cometh in with vanity, &c.] For it is in vain he came, and he shall depart in darknes.*

*Ver. 5, 6. Nor known any thing: this hath; &c.] Nor known the difference of one thing from another: ver. 6. Nay, though he had lived twice a thousand years, without enjoying happi-*

7 ¶ All the labour of man *is* for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled.

8 For what hath the wife more than the fool? what hath the poor, that knoweth to walk before the living?

9 Better *is* the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire: this *is* also vanity and vexation of spirit.

10 ¶ That which hath been is named already,

and it is known that it *is* man: neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he.

11 Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what *is* man the better?

12 For who knoweth what *is* good for man in *this* life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?

*happiness, do not both go to one place? Desvoeux.* Houbigant renders the clause in the 10th verse, *Yet hath he seen no good, by enjoying good.* From the instances mentioned in the first and second proof, the sacred orator infers, from the third to the present verses, by way of *corollary*, that the fate of an abortive is preferable to that of many men, and especially of those whose condition he had described, and to whose case he refers again. To have come into the world in vain; that is to say, so as to have nothing remaining of what one might imagine you came for; to depart without being taken notice of; to be soon forgotten; is the common fate of the abortive, and of the man who, notwithstanding the longest life most honourably spent, does not get fortune enough to enable him to provide a sepulchre for himself. Nay, the former has the advantage of him who had the tempting knowledge of the pleasures of this world, without being allowed the fruition: If the abortive was not blessed with the enjoyment, he was not tormented with the eagerness of desires.

*Ver. 8. What hath the poor, &c.] What remaineth also to the very beggar, who knoweth how to walk before the living?* The desire of the wife man who labours, is undoubtedly to make himself more comfortable than he could expect to be, by giving himself no manner of trouble: yet, when all is duly considered, it is plain, on the one hand, that the ultimate drift of all our occupations is, to be supplied with the necessaries of life; which is thus proverbially expressed, *All the labour of man is for his mouth;* and we find, on the other hand, that all that the wisest man can consume, or really enjoy, is no more than generally falls to the lot of the most wretched among men; viz. those who are forced to beg their bread; provided they behave so as not to preclude themselves from the beneficence of other men. *What remaineth to the wife more than to the ignorant? What, or that which remaineth also to the most miserable wretch, who knoweth how to walk before the living.* Thus the *wise* really has an advantage over the *ignorant* or *fool*, who either does not get, or, after he has gotten, does not enjoy (*ver. 2.*) the necessaries of life; but that advantage does not *fill his soul*, or satisfy his desires; as it does not raise him above the level of those who depend upon others for their subsistence, and who seldom fail of getting that by a proper demeanour, which the most industrious attains through his labour and application.

*Ver. 9. Better is the sight of the eyes]* The third and last proof, contained in this and the two preceding verses, is taken from the insatiableness of mens' wishes, whereby they are made miserable even when they get the utmost of what they can reasonably wish for. It is a vain and foolish

thing to give a loose to your desires, instead of being satisfied with what you at present enjoy; since, whatever you may wish for, it is impossible for you personally to enjoy more than what your constitution will bear; and that is very little, properly speaking, beyond the necessaries of life, which are enjoyed by every man upon earth, whether his wishes be extensive or not.

*Ver. 11. Seeing there be many things that increase vanity]* For there are many arguments to shew the multitude of vanities which prevail on the earth. Desvoeux: who concludes the verse here, and begins the 12th thus, *Now what remaineth to man? for who, &c.* Solomon, in the 10th and 11th verses, thought proper to draw a general conclusion from the two former propositions, which were hitherto fully established, after a full inquiry into men's occupations and schemes of happiness: It appears that the name of *vapour*, or *vanity*, which was given them in the beginning, is a very fit one. Nay, it is a name as properly to be given to man, as to any thing else; for man can never be able to withstand the appointment of God, who sufficiently testified his will by the ways of his providence.

*Ver. 12. Which he spendeth as a shadow]* Though he spendeth them under a shadow, in which who will shew a man what shall be after him? Desvoeux: who has shewn, that the phrase, *to spend his days under a shadow*, signifies, to spend them in ease and tranquillity. See p. 324. The 3d general proposition is contained in this verse. Men know not what is, or is not, truly advantageous to them, because they are either ignorant or unmindful of that which must come to pass after they are dead. The proofs of this *third proposition* we here, as before, subjoin analytically:

Chap. Verse.  
vi. 12.  
vii. 1, &c.

III. Proposition.

1st Proof. Wrong estimation of things. A digression intended (like that, chap. v. 1—9.) to prevent any misconstruction of the foregoing observations, and containing several advices, together with a strong commendation of him who gives them, in order to enforce the observation of the rules laid down by him.

9—12. 1st Advice. Not to blame Providence.  
13. 2d Advice. Not to judge of Providence.  
14, 15. 3d Advice. To submit to Providence.  
16—20. 4th Advice. To avoid excess.  
21, 22. 5th Advice. Not to mind idle reports.

3 H

23—25.

## CHAP. VII.

*Remedies against vanity are, mortification, patience, wisdom.  
The difficulty of getting wisdom.*

**A** GOOD name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth.

2 ¶ *It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart.*

3 *Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is*

Chap. Verfe.		Commendation of the foregoing advices from the author's application to examine every thing, and especially,
vii. 23—25.		
viii. 26—29.		1. Wickedness and ignorance.
1—8.		2. Wisdom.
9—14.		2d <i>Proof.</i> Anticipated or wrong judgments.
ix. 15—16.		1. That sin shall go unpunished, because it is so in this world.
7—9.		2. That life is preferable to death.
10.		1st <i>Corollary.</i> Earthly comforts are not of a criminal nature.
x. 11—15.		2d <i>Corollary.</i> A proper use must be made of our faculties.
16, &c.		3d <i>Proof.</i> Judgments which are seemingly right, yet truly false.
16.		4th <i>Proof.</i> Little regard paid to wisdom.
x. 17—4.		1. Past services are forgotten.
5—19.		2. The least fault is taken notice of.
20.		3. Favour gets what is due to worth.
		A <i>Caution</i> to prevent the abuse of the foregoing remarks.
PRACTICAL INFERENCES.		
xi. 1—4.		1. From the first proposition. We must give to earthly goods that stability only of which they are capable.
5, 6.		2. From the first and second propositions: We must, in our conduct, conform to the design of Providence towards us, and leave the success to God.
xii. 7, 8.		3. From the three propositions; but especially from the third: We must seek for happiness beyond the grave.
9—12.		Commendation of the work, from several considerations.
13, 14.		Conclusion of the whole.

This proposition, then, is supported by four proofs: But it must be observed, that though the special reason which is here annexed to the proposition, viz. that men do not mind futurity, is the principal to evince the main point; yet the author does not confine himself so closely to that reason, as to mention nothing in the course of the argument but what relates to it. He keeps close to the proposition, but allows himself the liberty of bringing in several parti-

culars to make out his proofs, which have no regard to that special reason. The first proof is taken from the ill-judged preference given by men to certain things above others, either through prejudice, or through depravity. Here our author uses a very remarkable art in pointing out the particulars whereof his proof is to consist. For, instead of explicitly mentioning these false opinions, he contents himself with shewing that they are false. To this effect, he alleges the judgment of the wise upon several subjects, concerning which the sentiments of the ignorant are too well known to stand in need of being expressly described: For the bare mention of the subject is sufficient to remind us of what the generality of men think of it. Thus, to have Solomon's arguments at full length, we must supply upon every article that which is known to be the prevailing opinion among such as know not *what is good for man among the living all the days of his vain life*, whenever the author does not mention it in express words. See on ver. 8.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The evil remarked in the beginning of the chapter is not peculiar to one place or age; it is still common under the sun, and a grief to every attentive observer. Blessed be God that in heaven there is no evil, and therefore no cause for lamentation!

1. The person described is a rich, covetous man. God hath given him *riches, wealth*; all which come from him, and are often the portion of the most unworthy; yet these bring *honour* and respect; for, to Mammon men generally bow. Add to this; a numerous family, to perpetuate his name; and long life, in which he might enjoy his abundance. In short, heart could not wish for more outward advantages than God hath bestowed upon him: but, notwithstanding, it appears evident in that man's life, that the comfort of it consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesses. For,

2. He has no heart to taste the mercies bestowed upon him; and then they are all empty and vain. He hath *not power to eat thereof*; his covetous temper will not allow himself or his family necessaries; and, withholding from the poor their portion, God punishes him, by suffering him to pine in the midst of plenty. He cannot trust his nearest relations, or his own children; but a *stranger*, who has wormed himself into favour, *eateth it*, preying upon him, and after his decease possessing his fortune. A vanity this, and amazing folly; *an evil disease*; a madness seldom cured, and fatal both to body and soul. *His soul is not filled with good*; his purse is filled with gold, his warehouses with stores, but his soul is still empty and uneasy; there is an aching void within, which none of these things can fill. *Nay, he hath seen no good*; through all his days, insensible to the mercies around him, and unable to relish any of the comforts



made better.

4 The heart of the wise *is* in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools *is* in the house of mirth.

5 *It is* better to hear the rebuke of the

wife, than for a man to hear the song of fools :

6 For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so *is* the laughter of the fool : this also *is* vanity.

7 ¶ Surely oppression maketh a wise man

comforts which he possesses. And, as his life is without joy, his death is without honour; he hath *no burial*, or none suitable to his rank: the fordidness of his temper makes him a niggard even to his corpse, and to forbid it in his will a becoming interment; or his heirs have so little esteem for him, that if they huddle him into a grave, they care not how meanly it is done.

3. Better it is to have been carried from the womb to the grave, than thus to have lived and died. *For he cometh in with vanity*, the abortive birth, and departeth in, or into, *darkness* unnoticed; he is laid in the dust, and his name shall be covered with darkness, forgotten and unknown: moreover, he hath not seen the sun, nor the miseries that are under it, nor known any thing of the troubles of this disordered world: *this hath more rest than the other*, having never groaned under the toils of labour, the evil of covetousness, or the misery of departing. They go to one place, the common bed of dust, where no distinction marks the putrid clay.

2dly, How vain are the toils of anxiety!

1. There is no satisfaction in them. *All the labour of man is for his mouth*, what he shall eat, and what he shall drink, and yet the appetite is not filled; avarice is insatiable, hunger continually returning, and pampered appetite ever craving; or *the soul is not satisfied*; it can relish nothing of these sensual indulgences.

2. In the enjoyments of this world, there is not that difference which appears between the wise and the fool, the rich and the poor. *For what hath the wise more than the fool?* what greater comfort in his possessions, or fruit of his labour? respecting the gratification of sensual appetite they are on a level: and *what hath the poor that knoweth to walk before the living?* If he be industrious, and dexterous in his business, he provides a livelihood for himself and family; and in his sphere enjoys his little, and tastes as much satisfaction therein as the rich in all their abundance.

3. Contentment with what we have is a far greater comfort, than to be always coveting more. *Better is the sight of the eyes*, the present portion before us, when enjoyed, than the wandering of the desire, still craving and insatiate; for *this is also vanity*: if the objects that we covet were given us, they would be still unsatisfactory; and the disappointments that we must meet with in the pursuit of them will be a vexation of our spirit.

4. After all our labours, we must remain merely human, with all the infirmities of man; and though we could attain all the riches of the east, or the empire of the world, it is, and must be known and acknowledged, that it is a man, a poor dying worm, still lighter in the balances than vanity itself.

5. There is no contending against God; he is mightier than we: it were presumption to question his wisdom or goodness, and madness to oppose his Omnipotence. His

will is law, to which, willing or unwilling, even the great, the wealthy, the mighty, must submit; and sickness and death, at farthest, will convince them that they are but men.

3dly, Hear, then, the conclusion of the matter:

1. Man's pursuits after creature-good do but the more perplex and trouble him. *Seeing there be many things that increase vanity*; knowledge, wealth, power, pleasure; *what is man the better?* Nay, is he not rather the worse? These things which promised him happiness, inordinately sought, prove a plague and a snare to him.

2. Man is a poor blind creature, and knoweth not what is for his own good; *for who knoweth what is good for man in this life?* None but God alone, who will do what is best; and our happiness is contentment in his dispensations.

3. Man's life is short, transitory, and vain. Years, nay, months, are too much to compute it by; it is reckoned by days, days of vanity, empty of all good, as a shadow wherein there is nothing substantial, and swiftly hurrying to their end.

4. He hath no foresight of what will happen when he is gone; what will be the condition of his posterity, and how his substance will be disposed of; so that his prospects in futurity afford him no more happiness than his present possessions.

## CHAP. VII.

*Ver. 3. Sorrow is better than laughter.] A sorrowful appearance is often better than laughter; for, notwithstanding the sadness of the countenance, the heart may be happy: Desvœux: who thinks, that not real sorrow, but the appearance of it only, is meant; such a serious countenance as is compatible with inward joy and satisfaction, though absolute grief does not seem to be so.*

*Ver. 5. The song of fools.] Mr. Desvœux, in a long and learned note, has shewn, that this song of fools refers to the encomiastic songs of strolling bards, who were a kind of extempore singers of stories at banquets, going from place to place, and suiting their performances to the taste of those who paid or entertained them; and praises are so palatable, especially to the great and rich, that it would be a wonder if songs which were to be paid for had not been filled with the encomiums of the purchasers; and I suppose nobody will doubt that such songs were more pleasant to the hearers, and better paid for, than the reprimands of wise men. See Tull. de Oratore, ii. 86, and Pope's Essay on Homer, p. 52.*

*Ver. 7. Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad.] Surely oppression shall give lustre to a wise man; and a gift corrupteth the heart. Every sentence contained in the first eight verses of this chapter offers an instance of the wrong judgment of the ignorant; and this is carried on so as to mention the judgments of the wise only, on the several subjects*

mad; and a gift destroyeth the heart.

8 Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: *and* the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.

9 Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.

10 Say not thou, What is *the cause* that the former days were better than these? for

thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.

11 ¶ Wisdom is good with an inheritance: and *by it there is* profit to them that see the sun.

12 For wisdom is a defence, *and* money is a defence: but the excellency of knowledge is, *that* wisdom giveth life to them that have it.

which are instanced; and not those of the ignorant, which are supposed to be sufficiently known. Yet those judgments of the ignorant must be always kept in view, as being the reverse of the sentiments of the wise. Thus by that mutual opposition they afford each other a mutual light. Now the subjects here spoken of are, on the one hand, *oppression*, or, according to some, *calumny*; and, on the other hand, *gifts* or *generosity*. The opinion of the generality of men concerning those subjects, compared together, is known. They certainly give the preference to a liberal above an oppressive government: and of consequence Solomon's maxim must either express or lay the foundation for some advantage arising even from oppression and tyranny; and what advantage can there possibly be in tyranny, besides its giving the wise man opportunity of exerting his abilities, or trying his virtues, and thereby adding lustre to his wisdom? This is exactly what the word *יְהוֹלֵל* *iéholel*, may and does originally mean. Desvœux.

Ver. 8. *And the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit*] *Better is he who considereth long, than he whose spirit is high.* We have, in this and the preceding verses, the first proof of the third general proposition. Most men, unmindful of futurity, prefer a delicate life to that course whereby a good reputation can be attained; yet a good reputation is preferable by much to the most refined luxury, ver. 1. A birth-day is every where a day of joy, whereas the day in which any one dies is a day of tears; yet the day of one's birth is the beginning of his troubles, which, to all outward appearance, are at an end the day on which he leaves this world, ver. 2. Few would choose to go to a house of mourning, if it were in their option to go to a feast; yet the consideration of one's end, which obtrudes itself upon the mind in a house of mourning, is a very profitable one; and what can you get at a feast equivalent to that? The wise knoweth it, and chooseth accordingly. The fool or ignorant behaves likewise agreeably to his wrong notions. A grave and serious deportment is not so welcome in the world as a merry countenance, which is considered as the surest token of a contented heart. Yet how often is the outward appearance deceitful! ver. 2—4. To be told of your faults by a discreet man, may be of real service to you; whereas the highest encomiums bestowed on you by the poetical panegyrics of flatterers, are as vain and as insignificant as the noise of burning thorns. Yet how few are there, who do not love adulation? ver. 5, 6. Tyranny and oppression are the worst of evils in the eye of the world, and justly so; yet the effect of oppression, with respect to the wise, is to make wisdom more conspicuous; and bribery, though relished by such as are the objects of it, is the real source of the greatest evil, the cor-

ruption of our morals, ver. 7. Any thing is more perfect (and consequently preferable) when finished, than when it is just begun; yet love of novelty, on the one hand, and aptness to be tired on the other, generally get the better of that very obvious reason. A hasty, assuming, peremptory, decisive man, frequently gets more applause than he who is called tedious, because he takes time to consider; yet how widely do they differ in the eye of reason! ver. 8.

Ver. 9. *To be angry;—for anger*] *To grieve; for grief, &c.*] So our translators have rendered the original word, chap. ii. 23. See also chap. v. 17. and xi. 10; and, thus rendered, it answers Solomon's purpose much better than *anger*.

Ver. 11, 12. *Wisdom is good with an inheritance*] *Wisdom is as good as an inheritance; nay, more profitable to them who see the sun; because both wisdom and money are a shelter to their possessors; but the advantage of the knowledge of wisdom is, that it preserveth the life of them who seek it.* The preference given to wisdom is not doubtful; but the reason given for that preference, as expressed in most translations, does not seem to have much strength in it. Wisdom gives life to them that have it; and does not money likewise supply them that have it with the means both of supporting, and of preserving their life in time of danger? And is not the equality in that respect allowed in the beginning of the verse? Where then lies the advantage? The sacred orator's meaning will appear in its true light, if, by a proper distinction between the several significations of the original word *בַּעַל* *baal*, we understand what he says of the *seekers*, and not of the possessors, of wisdom. The excellency of wisdom in this respect also is manifest, since its influence reaches those who have not yet acquired it, provided they love it, and are in pursuit of it; whereas money can be of no service to its fondest admirers, except they have it in their actual possession: So that the phrase in the text signifies not a matter or possessor of wisdom, but one who is addicted to it; a *philosopher* according to the true signification of the word: for, *hanc sapientiam qui expetunt Philosophi nominantur: nec quicquam aliud est Philosophia, si interpretari velis, quam studium sapientie.*\* See Cicero de Offic. ii. 2. and Desvœux. Having delivered his first proof, ver. 8, the sacred orator engages in a useful digression, the occasion of which I take to be this: He had mentioned several things, which, how proper soever they were to be taken notice of, in order to establish the proposition in hand, might be easily misconstrued, and wrong inferences drawn from them. Therefore it was fit that he should remove those inferences, before he passed to his 2d proof; especially as

\* Those who seek this wisdom are denominated Philosophers; nor is Philosophy any thing else, if you will have it defined, than the study of wisdom.

they

13 Consider the work of God: for who can make *that* straight, which he hath made crooked?

14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him.

15 All things have I seen in the days of

my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that longeth *his life* in his wickedness.

16 Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself?

17 Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before

they might have proved very detrimental to our ease and contentment in this world. To this effect he gives several advices, or precepts, the observation of which will be a sure guard against any danger arising from those wrong inferences; and then he enlarges upon the right he had to give such advices, from his unwearied application in examining every thing which is the object of human understanding, and from the knowledge that he had acquired through that application, though his success had greatly fallen short of his wishes. The *first advice* is, not to find fault with, or murmur at the dispensations of Providence, or, which is the same thing, to repine at our own condition, as if we had been kept in reserve for worse days than those of our forefathers. Such a complaint would betray our ignorance (which is here, as usual, styled foolishness), and an unpardonable neglect of inquiring into the matter complained of. For, in fact, it is not true that things from which men can derive any happiness are worse now than they were in former ages. Whatever was good in former times is so still. ver. 9, 10. Wisdom and riches still preserve their respective value. But wisdom has a great advantage over money; for, it will hinder a man from running into dangers, or engaging in undertakings, or taking a course of life, whereby a rich, but ignorant and imprudent, man must be brought to certain death. ver. 11, 12.

Ver. 13. Consider the work of God] *Second advice.* We should content ourselves with contemplating the works of God, without presuming to judge of them, or to set right that which is not so in our apprehension: because it is in no man's power to alter the appointment of God.

Ver. 14. In the day of prosperity be joyful] *In the day of prosperity enjoy it; but in the day of adversity, consider also that God hath made it in opposition to the other, to the end that man should not find out any thing of His ways.* The common interpretations of this text are not easily to be reconciled. That which I have given appears the most proper. For, what are we to say was the Almighty's design in ordering this world so, that the most opposite things, as prosperity and adversity, must come each in their turn, and very often without our being able to discover any other cause of either, than the will of the all-dispensing power? Certainly one consequence of this appointment is, to shew that man his folly who takes upon himself to determine concerning the ways of Providence. *God's judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out.* Rom. xi. 33.

The ways of heav'n are dark and intricate,  
Puzzled in mazes, and perplex'd with errors:  
Our understanding traces them in vain,  
Lost and bewilder'd in the fruitless search;  
Nor sees with how much art the windings run,  
Nor where the regular confusion ends.

Now this is the very design which is ascribed to our Maker. If you take the words *find after him*, for a metaphorical expression, *to find any thing after, or behind another*, you must go the same way he went before you; you must in a manner trace him, and of course be acquainted with his ways: but, as God would not have us trace his conduct in the government of the universe, he ordered the affairs of this world in such a manner, that through the mutual opposition between the several parts of his appointment, confusion *seems* to prevail, and the grounds of his determinations are hidden from us. See Desvœux and Addison.

Ver. 15. In his righteousness—In his wickedness] *Notwithstanding his righteousness—Notwithstanding his wickedness.* This and the preceding verse contain the third advice. We should receive both prosperity and adversity as coming from the hand of God, without either immoderate joy or unbecoming despondency. The one must be enjoyed, and the other submitted to, from a deep sense of God's wisdom, who has thus ordered the affairs of this world, that we might have sufficient proofs of his goodness and other perfections, and yet that we should not be able to reconcile every thing which happens to us with those very attributes, or fully to discover his ways. This point of doctrine, viz. that the ways of Providence are inscrutable, so directly contradicts the pride of men who pretend that their reason can account for every thing, that it was proper for the author to support it with some proof: but he chose to do it rather by alleging experience, the most unexceptionable of all arguments, than in any other way. And the instance that he alleges is full to the point. The conduct of the Almighty, in the distribution of good and evil in this world, is not to be accounted for, since it does often happen that the sinner is not punished, and that the righteous is not rewarded. Desvœux.

Ver. 16. Why shouldest thou destroy thyself?] *Why shouldest thou be left alone?* There is a very remarkable opposition in this and the following verse between the several excesses there mentioned, and a very proper distinction between the consequences which are to be apprehended from them. I cannot say that modern interpreters have entirely destroyed

that

thy time?

18 *It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all.*

19 Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty men which are in the city.

20 *For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.*

21 Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee.

22 For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.

23 ¶ All this have I proved by wisdom: I said, I will be wise; but it was far from me.

that opposition. *Righteous and wicked, wise and foolish*, are very proper terms of opposition; but that they may remain so, each of them must retain the signification wherein that opposition lies; and that signification cannot be retained, if you represent either righteousness or wickedness, wisdom or folly, as productive of consequences which can never be apprehended from what is commonly understood by those words: For in that case the reader is led to conclude that they are taken in a different sense from that wherein their opposition is visible; and then he is at a loss where to find this opposition. Thus the opposition itself may be at least weakened and obscured by a neglect which seems at first to affect a different part of the sentence only; and I am afraid it is greatly so in our version: ver. 16. *Be not, &c.—Why shouldest thou destroy thyself?* ver. 17. *Be not, &c.—Why shouldest thou die before thy time?* One easily perceives how a premature death is the consequence of an excess of wickedness and folly; but, to make destruction a consequence of an excess or *over-affectation* of wisdom or righteousness, looks like propounding a riddle. It is true, we are dissuaded from both; yet it is plain from what follows, as well as from the nature of the subject, that they are not to be put upon a level; yet this would be the consequence of Solomon's advice, as worded in the received version; for destruction undoubtedly implies more, and is a worse evil, than death. Therefore, if the over-righteous and over-wise be the man who strives to be foolishly particular, and to distinguish himself from the rest of the world by an *ill-judged affectation* of righteousness and wisdom, (as his being set in opposition to the wicked and foolish requires that he should,) it is not probable that Solomon represented destruction as the consequence of such a man's behaviour. Now the original word תשובה *tisbomem*, might be translated, *be made an object of wonder*: which signification tallies very well with the case of a man who strives to distinguish himself by running into an *over-affectation* either of righteousness or wisdom: therefore it is not possible to determine ourselves for the one, rather than for the other, except it be from the farther consideration of some other circumstance. The two warnings annexed by the sacred orator to the directions that he gives, that one should avoid the opposite excesses, must, by the manner in which they are worded, answer each other. Thus it is necessary that something which a man would fain avoid should be mentioned in the first as well as in the second; and this consideration has induced me, with Le Clerc, to prefer the first signification. See Desvœux, and Le Clerc.

*Ver. 18. It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this] The good which thou shouldest take hold of consisteth in this (namely, thou shouldest never withdraw thine hand from it), that he who feareth God shall avoid all these inconveniences. See Desvœux, p. 314.*

*Ver. 19. Wisdom strengtheneth the wise] That wisdom (see ver. 18.) will strengthen the wise, more than ten princes which are in a city. From the 16th to the 20th verse we have the fourth advice. All affectation must be avoided. An over-affectation to be better or wiser than the rest of mankind, can turn to no good account. This affectation of righteousness is real folly: ver. 16—20. The contrary extreme is still more pernicious, though it is the case of many to fall into it, lest they should be deemed hypocrites. But avowed and excessive wickedness may easily bring a man to a shameful and untimely end, especially if it be accompanied with the foolishness, or heedlessness, which often makes men run headlong into any thing which their passions prompt them to: ver. 17. Therefore the middle course between any kind of affectation must be taken, and constantly pursued. That middle course consists in the fear of God, whereby a man avoids all excesses, and all inconveniences arising from them: ver. 18. This is the true wisdom; the true principle of spiritual strength, whereby a man may be better enabled to go through this world, than any town to stand the attacks of her enemies, though ten powerful princes should unite in her favour, and join their forces to defend her bulwarks. This is a support which can never fail: ver. 19, 20.*

*Ver. 21, 22. Curse thee—curst others] Speaking evil of thee—hast spoken evil of others. Symmachus in both these places renders the word by λοιδορειν. Many good men's consciences will never accuse them of having cursed others; but where is he who never spoke an evil word of his neighbour? These two verses contain the fifth and last advice. The tranquillity of our mind is not to be disturbed by every idle report or discourse wherein we are wronged. We must not even mind such reports, lest we should find our servants among those who revile us; which, though very common, is even more provoking than to be slandered by strangers. A very proper motive is added to enforce that advice. We may know from our own experience upon what slight foundations scandal is generally grounded; and that it is the way of the world, even for the best men to be sometimes evil spoken of; since it has been too often our case, in our unregenerate state, not to be sparing as we ought of other men's characters: ver. 22.*

*Ver. 23. All this have I proved by wisdom] All this have*

24 That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out?

25 ¶ I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness:

26 And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: Who so pleaseth God shall

escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her.

27 Behold, this have I found, saith the Preacher, counting one by one, to find out the account.

28 Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found.

*Have I knowingly examined: I said, I will be wise; but wisdom went far from me: ver. 24. Whatever is so far off, nay, removed to the greatest depth, who shall find it? Desvoeux.*

*Ver. 25. To seek out wisdom, and the reason of things.] To seek out wisdom and reason, and that I might know the wickedness of ignorance, and the foolishness of that which is in the greatest esteem. See chap. ii. 2. That the advices above given might be the better received, our author declares that he speaks of nothing but what he has examined with all the care and application which human wisdom can suggest. "I resolved, says he, to be thoroughly wise; and though I was stopped far short of the end that I proposed, by the very nature of the inquiries in which I was engaged, yet I went as far as I possibly could: ver. 23. The farther I advanced, the more I was convinced that wisdom was flying from me. Yet I did not leave off the pursuit of knowledge, and of whatever is the object of human reason. The wickedness or impiety which is the natural consequence of ignorance, the foolishness of every thing which men generally value the most, were also the subjects of my earnest inquiries;" ver. 24, 25. However, his discoveries, abstractedly from what is to be said hereafter of the excellency of wisdom, were confined to a few articles. First, bad women are excessively dangerous, and, on account of the many evils which are brought upon men by their means, may be ranked in the same class with death itself. Their arts and wiles are such, that it is scarcely possible for any one to escape out of their snares, except he is one of those who, by a constant pursuit of true virtue and holiness, have made themselves acceptable to God Almighty. Secondly, though some men may, through that means, be enabled to avoid being led into a wicked course of life; yet there is no one bad woman, but is mistress either of such bodily charms, or of such persuasive arts, as to be able to gain some men to her own ends. How they can, or why they have been by nature so framed as to be able to compass those ends, is a secret as yet undiscovered: but the fact itself is attested by daily experience, and Solomon had more of that experience than any man. Thirdly, Whatever devices men may have either sought out, or been led into, sometimes to their own destruction, God is no ways answerable for them, as he created them upright, and still offers them his grace. This is the only consideration which deserves to be insisted on; and it is such, that we must keep it constantly in view, whenever we are talking of men's mistakes or misdemeanours.*

*Ver. 26. Whose heart is snares and nets.] Who herself is a*

*company of hunters; nay, her heart is nets; her hands are bands. He who is good in the presence of God shall escape from her, &c. The simile is here taken from hunting; and there is a distinction plainly marked in the original, and well observed by the ancients, between the woman herself on the one hand, and her heart and hands on the other; which I have endeavoured to preserve in the version that I have given. See Desvoeux, p. 396.*

*Ver. 27, 28. Behold, this have I found, &c.] Behold, this have I found (saith the orator), examining them one by one, to find out the reason of it: ver. 28. Which my soul seeketh still, without being able to find it; one man, I say, among a thousand have I found, but a woman among them all I did not find. It is amazing how different the expositions have been of this very elliptical passage. The only supplement which can be had from the context is, that which the reader will find expressed in the paraphrase on the following verse; namely, that Solomon found most men so disposed, as to be easily taken in the snares which are laid; there having been but very few of his acquaintance, to whom this part of his observation could be applied; He who is good in the presence of God shall escape from her: and, with respect to the women of his acquaintance, that they had all answered the character he had given: ver. 26. without finding a single one who was not like a band of hunters, out of whose hand the fugitive deer seldom escapes. Thus Solomon does in a manner fill up the vacancies which are seemingly left in the text. Let us observe, however, that through Divine Grace being good seems to be the best preservative against the spells of bad women; which induced me to preserve that expression of the original, ver. 26. and not to change it, as the authors of the received version did, into that which is the infallible effect of being really good; viz. pleasing God, but not the thing itself.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have in this chapter strange paradoxes to the unwise, but great truths to him who understandeth.

1. A good name is better than precious ointment; a name eminent for the exercise of every gracious and christian temper, is infinitely preferable to all the possessions of earth, and more fragrant than the richest perfume: And,

2. The day of death than the day of one's birth; that is, to those who die in the Lord, and are dismissed from the burthens of mortality to rest in him; a consummation devoutly to be wished for, which for ever puts a period to all

29 Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

### CHAP. VIII.

*Kings are greatly to be respected. The divine providence is to be observed. It is better with the godly in adversity, than with the wicked in prosperity. The work of God is unsearchable.*

**W**HO is as the wise man? and who knoweth the interpretation of a

all our sins and sorrows, and opens the golden gates of life and immortality.

3. *It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting; society is not evil, but indulgence is always dangerous: to mourn is painful, but great good often arises from it; and especially apt are those melancholy seasons, when the dead are carried forth, and the corpse and the coffin are before us, to make impressions on our hearts more blessed in their issue and influence, than any that we should receive in the house of feasting. They bid us learn to die, remember, and prepare for it; they give us a striking exhibition of the end of all men, and make us feel that dust we are, and unto dust returning; and the living will lay it to his heart, at least those who are wise will do so, and not forget to make application of the subject to their own hearts.*

4. *Sorrow is better than laughter; better for our souls at least; for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better; when beholding departing friends, while we mourn over them, we are quickened to give greater diligence to follow them, and make our calling and election sure; or affected with godly sorrow for sin, which worketh repentance unto salvation, never to be repented of: while laughter often has ill effects, destroys the spirit of seriousness, makes the heart light and vain, and estranges it from God. Therefore the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, in meditation, engaged with thoughts of mortality, though the objects be not before him; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth; they cannot bear a serious reflection: if a solemn impression of any scene of death have been made upon them, they hasten to some gay company to efface it; and are in their element when mirth and jollity reign.*

5. *It is better to bear the rebuke of the wife; however sharp or grating it may be at first, the effects of it will be salutary; and it will be our wisdom, and in the issue our comfort, to have heard and profited thereby: and therefore rather to be chosen than the song of fools; either their flatteries which tickle the ear, or their songs and carousals, which are vain, unprofitable, pernicious; for as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool, loud and noisy, but suddenly expiring; and succeeded with groans and wailing without end. This also is vanity.*

2dly, Solomon had observed the oppressions under the sun; here he notes one sad effect of them.

1. *Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad; either under the length and severity of his own trials he is ready to grow impatient; or, observing the sufferings of the inno-*

thing? a man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the boldness of his face shall be changed.

2 ¶ *I counsel thee to keep the king's commandment, and that in regard of the oath of God.*

3 *Be not hasty to go out of his sight: stand not in an evil thing; for he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him.*

4 *Where the word of a king is, there is*

cent under the power of the wicked, he is tempted to question the equity of the divine providence; and a gift destroyeth the heart, occasions justice to be perverted to oppression, or destroyeth a heart of gifts, such is the generous heart of the wise.

2. He exhorts to patient waiting for the issue; for, however dark and lowering the scene may appear, when oppressors rule, yet mark the end; for *better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof*; God will break the rod of the wicked, as he did that of Pharaoh, and relieve the injured innocent, as his Israel of old, from their hands. Thus *the patient in spirit, who meekly submits to God's providential afflictions, and waits quietly upon him, is better, a better man, and will soon be proved infinitely happier, than the proud in spirit, whose lofty looks God will abase, and who, unable to endure the chastisements brought upon them, as wild bulls in a net, fret and torment themselves only the more.*

3. He warns us against the effusions of anger. *Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry, impatient of contradiction or delay, and firing on every spark of provocation; but repress the risings of resentment; be slow to wrath; and, if it swells, see that it quickly subsides; for anger resteth in the bosom of fools; they entertain it, and, though they cover it with deceit, they wait only for an opportunity to take their revenge.*

4. We must not be always complaining of the evil of our times, as men are too apt to be, and fancying the former days better than these; when, in truth, it is merely our ignorance of former days that makes us imagine this. The great concern of every man in bad days is, to mend one; and then the times will soon be better.

3dly, We have,

1. Some of the great commendations of wisdom.

(1.) *It is good with an inheritance; it is in its own nature good, but with an inheritance it renders a person more distinguished, and enables him to be more extensively useful; and by it there is profit to them that see the sun; men in general enjoy the blessing of a wife man's affluence.*

(2.) *Wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence, or a shadow, under which we sit in safety: severally, they are a protection; united, they mutually conspire to increase each other's efficacy.*

(3.) *It giveth life to them that have it, and this is wisdom's peculiar excellency: riches often endanger the life of their possessor, but, with divine knowledge, experimentally possessed, spiritual life is inseparably connected.*

(4.) *It is better than strength; for wisdom strengtheneth the wife*

power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou?

5 Whofo keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing: and a wise man's heart dif-

*wise*, inspires them with courage, directs them how to act, and enables them to foil the attacks of their enemies, more than ten mighty men which are in the city; which is safer under the care of such prudent counsellors, than if guarded by numerous warriors.

2. Our duty is submission and conformity to the divine will. Consider the work of God, the perfection and excellence thereof, to silence all murmuring against the dispensations of his providence, which would be also vain as it is vile: for *who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked?* whatever afflictions he sends, or judgments he executes, none can stay his hand, or say unto him, *what dost thou?* therefore, in every condition, our duty is to make the best improvement of it. In the day of prosperity, when God showers down his spiritual and temporal blessings, be joyful, acknowledge his hand, praise him for the mercy, and improve it to his glory: but in the day of adversity, which will come in its turn, consider the end for which the affliction was sent, and seek to correspond with God's designs therein. *Note*: This is a changing world; we should neither be too much elated with prosperity, nor depressed with adversity; but rejoice with trembling, and look forward in hope: for God hath set the one over-against the other, each in its season to work together for his faithful people's good, to the end that men should find nothing after him; either nothing that he can amend in the work of God, or nothing certain here below; and therefore he must live upon the divine providence, and be prepared for whatever God hath prepared for him.

3. The dispensations of providence which seem most dark ought not to stagger us. *All things have I seen in the days of my vanity*, the days of his life, or those more afflictive ones of his departure from God: and perhaps the observations that he here makes might, on former occasions, have contributed to his fall, and tempted him to infidelity. *There is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness*, not eternally; for his state, God-ward, is secure; but the greatest piety does not exempt men from the heaviest afflictions; nay, perhaps it exasperates the enmity of the wicked against them, and gives occasion to their persecutors; and *there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness*, prospers, and is successful, even to old age; and, perhaps, protected by the very fruits of his injustice: but this is not the place of recompence; the day is at hand, when the calamities of the righteous shall be found their greatest mercies, and the prosperity of the wicked their ruin.

4. He gives an admonition to the self-righteous, and a warning to sinners. *Be not righteous over-much*; which does not refer to true righteousness, of which we cannot have too much; but to the affectation of appearing righteous before men: when persons are rigid censurers of others, place religion in austerities which God never enjoined, or by intemperate zeal hurt that cause which they profess to defend: *neither make thyself over-wise*, either above what is written, or opinionated of thy abilities, severely critical, arrogantly dictating; *why shouldst thou destroy thyself?* by needless austerities, or meddling in other men's matters, to

provoke their wrath; or, *why shouldst thou be stupid?* regarded as such, through thy foolish conduct; or *desolate*, every one shunning thy acquaintance, and hating thy company. *Be not over-much wicked*, run not into riot and excess; or, *do not fright thyself*, so as to be cast down into despair, under a sense of thy guilt; and thus it stands contrasted with the proud presumption before rebuked: *neither be thou foolish*, so as to be terrified with needless fear, or to grow profligate; *why shouldst thou die before thy time?* hastened to the grave by intemperance or the sword of justice.

5. The fear of God will be our best preservative. *It is good that thou shouldst take hold of this admonition and advice; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand*, continue a diligent observer of these things; for, *he that feareth God shall come forth of them all*, saved from the dangerous extremes, preserved amidst all difficulties, and, under the divine guidance, enabled to walk in the straight path of wisdom and truth, without deviating to the right hand or the left.

6. Though to do good, and avoid evil, is the labour, desire, and prayer of every gracious soul that is born of God; yet infirmities cleave to the best: So that *there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good to the full extent of the Adamic law—the law of works, and sinneth not*: we must not expect to meet with any among the sons of men, who are not compassed with infirmity.

7. It is wise to turn a deaf ear to whatever might provoke or exasperate us. *Take no heed unto all words that are spoken*; be not curious to inquire what others think or say of you; and seem not to hear what had better be dropt in silence than brought to an explanation. *Give not thine heart*, in the original; be not uneasy or solicitous about it, *lest thou hear thy servant curse thee*, whose insolence and ingratitude would render the provocation the greater (and they who hearken to their servants' words will often hear disagreeable things). We must bear with others, if it were only through the consciousness of our having been in the same condemnation. *For oftentime also thine own heart knoweth, that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others*, wished them ill, spoken of them disrespectfully, or laid on them hard censures: the sense of our own failings should preserve us from anger, and the provocation remind us of, and humble us for, the sins of the like nature which we ourselves have committed.

4thly, Solomon had proved the vanity of all things by dear-bought experience, and here he acknowledges it.

1. He owns the defects of his wisdom, after all his pursuits. *All this have I proved by wisdom*; all that he has spoken in the foregoing chapters: *I said, I will be wise*; so far as the greatest industry would carry the most enlarged understanding, he was resolved to go: and with the most indefatigable diligence he pursued the research; but still it fled his grasp; he could not fathom the depths, either of nature, providence, or grace; many things were hid, and, while the effects were evident, the causes of them were mysterious. Thus *it was far from me*; the wisdom that he sought he was unable to attain; *that which is far off, or far*

cerneth both time and judgment.

6 ¶ Because to every purpose there is time

and judgment; therefore the misery of man is great upon him.

*off that which has been; the works of creation and providence are far above the human comprehension, the knowledge of former things lost in oblivion, or that wisdom, which was originally in man, now departed from him; and exceeding deep, who can find it out? God's perfections and providences are by us unsearchable; the attempt to fathom them will but convince us of our own weakness.*

2. He desired to be acquainted with folly as well as wisdom, and applied his heart *to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness: sin is exceedingly deceitful; it requires pains to strip off the mask, and discover its deep malignity: but when its sinfulness is seen, then shall we upbraid our folly for having yielded to it, and count those pleasures madness which promised the highest satisfaction, especially those fleshly lusts, to which Solomon here seems particularly to allude. Note: True penitents cannot find a name bad enough with which to brand their abominations, and upbraid their own folly and sin.*

3. The result of the inquiry was, a discovery of the great evil that he had committed in yielding to the sinful love of women; on which, with deepest anguish, he now reflects. *I find more bitter than death, the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands; the sweets of sin were momentary, the pangs of it mortal and abiding. Now his convictions began to fasten upon his soul, he feels the very agonies of death in his conscience: the smiles and blandishments which promised so much pleasure have left a sting behind, the poison of which drinketh up the spirit: and, once entangled in these fatal cords, hard, very hard it is to recover; and every new indulgence adds strength to the snare, and renders the hope of recovery the more desperate. Whoso pleaseth God, shall escape from her; he will preserve them in the hour of temptation; for of ourselves we have no power to withstand for a moment. If we be, therefore, kept from the temptation, or under it, we must regard it as a great mark of God's favour, and acknowledge it with deep thankfulness: but the sinner shall be taken by her; God will, in judgment, give him up to his own heart's desires, and suffer him to perish in the iniquities that he has chosen.*

4. He observes the sad and sinful state of man in general, and concludes with pointing out the source whence all the evil proceeds. *Behold, this have I found (saith the Preacher), the bitterness of a harlot's snares, or the fewness of the faithful; counting one by one, to find out the account, both men and women, within the compass of his knowledge, earnestly solicitous to find out, if but one excellent among them, which yet my soul seeketh, and hitherto had sought almost in vain, one man among a thousand have I found faithful; or few, so very few, then walked in the narrow way: or, of a thousand who have fallen into the snares of the adulterers, not more than one have escaped; but a woman among all these have I not found; of all the bad women he had known, not one in a thousand was ever reclaimed: or perhaps among all his wives and concubines, he found not one who answered that character of virtue and excellence which he sought. Lo! this only have I*

*found from the scriptures of truth, that God hath made man upright, perfect in knowledge and righteousness; but sad experience now evinces how fearfully apostate he is become, and far removed from his once happy state. They have sought out many inventions; not content with the station in which God had placed them, they affected to be as wise as the Elohim, and, daring to pluck the forbidden fruit, lost their innocence, were plunged into sin, wretchedness, and shame, which their miserable excuses but rendered the more notorious; and their corrupted offspring copy their destructive ways: and yet, through the grace of God, a glorious multitude, which no one can number, have been and shall be saved from all these pollutions.*

## CHAP. VIII.

*Ver. 1. Who is as the wise man? &c.] Who is like the wise man, and who knoweth how to solve difficulties? A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine; whereas a sullen look [Heb. The roughness of his face] would make him an object of hatred. The latter clause of this verse, setting aside the figures, might be thus expressed; A man's wisdom will bring him favour; but arrogance will make him hated.*

*Ver. 2—4. I counsel thee to keep, &c.] I tell thee, observe thou the king's face; nay, mind it in regard to the oath: be not hasty: ver. 3. Go out of his presence; stay not whilst he gives wrong orders; for whatsoever pleaseth him, he will do; ver. 4. Because the word of a king is an absolute command, and who shall say, &c.? The word rendered God, in the second verse, אֱלֹהִים *elohim*, sometimes signifies men in authority, princes or magistrates; and I know not, says Mr. Desvœux, but it should be thus understood in the present passage; at least it has that signification in a place (Exod. xxii. 28.) where Moses treats the same subject which is here treated by Solomon, namely, the outward regard which must be shewn to persons in authority. The consideration of the oath whereby the nobles and great men of the court are bound to support the king's dignity and authority, is a very proper one to induce a courtier to behave discreetly and respectfully, whenever he sees his sovereign inclined to give orders with which he would not choose to comply; for whoever does not behave with the utmost care in such circumstances unavoidably draws upon himself the resentment, not of the king only, but likewise of all those *elohim*, or great men. This seems to me to be the most probable interpretation of the place; yet as the words, in regard of the oath of *elohim*, are not the principal, but only an additional motive to the discreet behaviour here recommended; and as that advice is contained in a kind of parenthesis, which has little or no connexion with the rest of the argument, we cannot easily determine any thing with certainty from the nature of the motives proposed in what follows. Duty and prudence generally go together; and Solomon may very properly have reminded his hearers in the words now under consideration of what duty required; though in the remainder of the argument he insists on nothing but what is suggested by prudence. Thus the words may be understood of the solemn oath of allegiance, wherein God has been called upon, and in consequence*



7 For he knoweth not that which shall be: for who can tell him when it shall be?

8 ¶ *There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither bath be*

power in the day of death: and *there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it.*

9 All this have I seen, and applied my

quence whereof, all subjects are bound, at least, not to fly in the king's face by sedition or open rebellion.

Ver. 5. *Who keepeth the commandment*] *He that observeth despotic commands, will not discern a wrong order; but the wise man's heart will discern both time and reason: (ver. 6.) For there is both time and reason to every determination of his will; because man's evils are multiplied upon him (ver. 7.) by his not knowing futurity; for who will shew him what turn things shall take?* Desvœux. By means of his translation, the opposition is exactly kept up, and every thing is plain. The reason given for advising to withdraw from your observation of the king's countenance, as soon as you perceive that he is about to give an *evil word*, or wrong order, is proper; he will do whatsoever he pleaseth; and you cannot expect that he should allow you the liberty of controlling his absolute commands, especially when he is in a passion. The opposition is, between him who prostitutes his discernment to passive obedience, and him who, through a proper use of his reason, deserves the name of a wise man.

Ver. 8. *There is no man that hath power over the spirit*] *No man is absolute commander over the wind to retain the wind; and there is no commander against the day of death; and there is no embassy to be admitted during the battle.* Desvœux; who remarks, that if ancient interpreters had plainly and literally translated the first clause, *No man hath power over the wind to confine the wind*, no one would now imagine that any thing else beside the *wind and storms* were here mentioned by Solomon; as was very well understood by the Latin interpreters of the Syriac and Arabic versions: but, the Greek interpreters having made use of the ambiguous word *πνευμα*, their successors determined that word to mean either the soul at large, or some particular affection of the soul. Among things which it is not in any one's power to master, or, if we keep closer to the original, among things which *have no commander among men* who can dispose of them at his will, none had a better right to be mentioned than wind and death. The two sentences which follow look very like similes contracted into proverbs; and each of them has, besides the literal signification, a farther meaning; which may be easily discovered from their connexion with the subject in hand; namely, the difficulty of extricating ourselves out of the many dangers to which we are daily exposed. Why should not this be likewise a simile to the same purpose? The image of irresistible storms is so much the more proper in this place, as it may, besides the principal subject, imply a beautiful allusion to the violence of parties and factions, which so often rage at court. However, the application of these three proverbial similes to the argument may be thus supplied; *It is as impossible to extricate yourself out of the difficulties into which your opposing wrong measures, without discerning both time and reason, will involve*

*you; as to command the wind or death, or to have ambassadors admitted during the heat of the battle.* I shall not dwell any longer upon this passage; but I hope it may be looked upon as an advantage, in the interpretation which I propose, that, instead of one single thought (viz. the unavoidability of death), in three different dresses, which most modern interpreters find here, it discovers three distinct ideas, and every one of them well connected with the subject treated by Solomon. The interpreter who makes a judicious writer a tautologist is not the most likely to have hit his true meaning. As far as to the end of the seventh chapter has been declared what discoveries Solomon had made in the latter part of his inquiry concerning the *wickedness of ignorance, and the foolishness of that which is in the greatest esteem.* It remains that we should have an account of his success in the former part of the same, concerning *wisdom.* To this effect, he enlarges upon the excellency of wisdom, which principally appears from its being the only sure guide by whose assistance a man can extricate himself out of the difficulties and dangers of this world.

“No man,” says he, “is to be compared with the wise: “No man, besides him, knoweth how to behave in the most difficult occurrences of life: ver. 1. I tell you, I, who “have applied to wisdom more than any man,—Observe “both the countenance and discourses of the king; and “that for your own sake, for those who approach his person are sworn to support him. Be not so rash as to “contradict him. Do not stay to hear what you cannot “prove, for it would be in vain for you to oppose it. Some “make it a duty blindly to comply with every whim of their “superiors, without ever allowing themselves the liberty to “examine whether they are right or wrong; but the wise “man always makes use of his discernment, and knoweth “when and how he should either obey or forbear obeying: ver. 2—5. For, though other men may act at “random; yet to him every determination of the will has “its proper time and proper reasons to support it; because “he knows that, as he is equally unable to dive into futurity, and to command events, the utmost caution is necessary “to avoid the many dangers to which a man is daily “exposed, especially at court. It would be too late to “think of mitigating the king's wrath when once it is “kindled against you. The safest way is to prevent it, “by declining rather than opposing such orders as you “cannot comply with. The blind compliance, which is “that of the wicked, is not safe or honest; and, though “it may for the present ingratiate the courtier with his “master, yet the bad consequences of his obsequiousness “must sooner or later appear; and then he shall answer “for them.” ver. 6—8.

Ver. 9, 10. *All this have I seen*] *All this have I observed, when I bestowed all the application that I was capable of on all works which are done under the sun; while man exerciseth an*

heart unto every work that is done under the sun: *there is* a time wherein one man ruleth over another to his own hurt.

10 And so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy; and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: this *is* also vanity.

11 ¶ Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily; therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

12 ¶ Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his *days* be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him:

13 But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong *his* days, *which are* as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.

14 There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there be just *men*, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked: again, there be wicked *men*, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous: I said, that this *also is* vanity.

15 ¶ Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall abide with him of his labour the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun.

16 ¶ When I applied mine heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done upon the earth: (for also *there is that* neither day nor night seeth sleep with his eyes:)

17 Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done

*absolute authority over man to hurt him: ver. 10. Nay, then I saw wicked men buried. Though they came even from the place of prostitution, they shall go and be praised in the city where they have done so.* The word *קדושה* *kedosh*, which I have rendered the place of prostitution, signifies, properly speaking, nothing but the place of him who is set apart; and, from the public prostitutes of both sexes among the heathen, it was applied to the place dedicated to that infamous separation, or consecration of their bodies. It is probable, that our author alluded to some known history in his time. See Desvœux, p. 561, and the paraphrase on ver. 14.

*Ver. 12. Though a sinner do evil an hundred times] Because the sinner dieth committing evil, even from the delays granted to him; thus I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, who will continue to fear before his face.*

*Ver. 14. There is a vanity] After a long but useful digression (See on ver. 8.) the author resumes the thread of his reasoning: but the second proof that he brings in to support this third proposition is so artfully connected with the latter part of the digression, that no chasm is to be perceived in the discourse. This second proof is taken from those wrong judgments which are owing to an over-hasty observation of things, and consists of two instances. The first instance is that of the practical inferences drawn by the sinners from what is daily observed under a bad government, viz. that the wicked, nay, the most abandoned men, are not punished according to their deserts, but enjoy even the honours of a funeral pomp, the last of earthly rewards: From thence the generality of men conclude, that evil may be committed with impunity: ver. 9, 10. Now, that this is a wrong judgment can appear from no other consideration than this, viz. that there is no sufficient ground, from that observation, to think that a man's being laid in his grave puts him out of the reach of punishment. It may, nay it must, be said to the contrary; and our author says he knows it, or concludes it from the very observation which the wicked wrest to their own purpose, that*

rewards and punishments shall certainly attend holiness and virtue on the one hand, and wickedness and impiety on the other; whence it follows that the prolongation of a life which must be attended with the continual dread of impending vengeance is a very slight advantage. Yet, on the other hand, it must be owned, that the seeming misapplication of rewards and punishments in this world, which, when duly considered, affords such strong presumptions of the existence of a future state, is for a hasty observer a vain principle, or the source of vain and dangerous conclusions. ver. 11—14.

*Ver. 15. For that shall abide with him of his labour] And this shall borrow him from his labour.* We have here an image which will not disgrace Solomon's pencil. Man in this world is the property of labour. God Almighty made him so. If ever that tyrannical owner parts with him, it is only by way of loan: he must be returned, as will appear chap. xi. 8. xii. 3.

*Ver. 16, 17. To see the business that is done upon the earth] To observe the occupations of man upon the earth; and that even day and night he doth not see sleep with his eyes, ver. 17. Then I understood that this is all God's own work; that man is not able to find out the end of this work which is done under the sun: Therefore, though a man should labour, &c. See Desvœux, and chap. iii. 11.*

REFLECTIONS.—Ist, Wisdom is indeed of infinite importance. We have here,

1. Its great commendation. *Who is as the wise man? comparable to him for excellence; or who knoweth the interpretation of a thing, or a word? none but those who are taught of God can understand his heavenly wisdom, or interpret his word to the edification of men, or improve the conjunctures of his providence aright. Such a one will be highly honoured and respected; for a man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, as Moses's did when he came down from the mount; and they who see it admire the lustre and excel-*

under the sun: because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea

farther, though a wise man think tok now it, yet shall he not be able to find it.

excellence which appears in all his conversation: or enlightens his face, enables him to see distinctly the way in which he should walk; and the boldness of his face shall be changed; it teaches the rough and auitere to smooth their rugged brows, and makes the fierce gentle as the lamb; for, when the heart by grace is changed, the very countenance bears the divine impression.

2. The proof of wisdom instanced in dutiful allegiance to the king. *I counsel thee to keep the king's commandment, obedient in all things to the government under which we live; and that, not merely for fear of punishment, but for conscience-sake, in regard of the oath of God, the oath of allegiance; or, but with a regard of the oath of God; when human injunctions are opposite to the Divine commands, then must we obey God rather than man. Be not hasty to go out of his sight, so as to withdraw from his presence disrespectfully, to quit his service, and retire in disgust: stand not in an evil thing; if we have done wrong, we must acknowledge it and beg pardon, not persist in our perverseness: for he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him, and therefore to offend him who has power to punish is dangerous; for where the word of a king is, there is power: there are multitudes ready to fly at his orders, and execute his vengeance on those who dare contradict him: and who may say unto him, What doest thou? As dangerous as it is to rebel, so advantageous is it to obey. For who so keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing, but enjoy peace and quietness, protected by the powers that he obeys; and a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment, waits the proper season to prefer the grievances which he may feel, and seeks to procure redress with prudence.*

The whole of this passage may also be referred to our duty towards the King of kings, whose commandments are all most excellent. From his presence there is no hiding ourselves; to attempt concealment of an evil thing from his all-seeing eye, were folly; to continue impenitent, destruction; for his power is universal and absolute; and if he will punish, none can resist, or question his authority. Obedience to him will insure blessedness; they who have him for their king, and approve themselves loyal subjects, need fear no evil: and herein is wisdom to discern the moment of opportunity, and in time to provide for eternity, knowing the judgment approaching, when every man must receive according to his works.

2dly, It is the character of the wise, that he discerneth the time; and the want of this discernment is the cause of much human misery. For,

1. *Because to every purpose there is time and judgment, the proper season and manner when it should be put in execution; the ignorance, improvidence, and neglect of men in this behalf, occasion most of their distresses. They trifle with the opportunity, and it slips irrecoverably by; therefore the misery of man is great upon him, and he has usually only his own negligence to blame for the sufferings that he undergoes; which prudent foresight, and careful diligence, might probably have prevented. For he knoweth not that which shall be, or whether ever again he shall have the opportunity that he has lost, and none know what to-*

morrow will bring forth: for who can tell him when it shall be, or how it shall be? future events are secrets concealed from human foresight; the present moment only is our own, and time is to be redeemed by us as it flies.

2. Death is hastening towards us; and when he comes, there is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit from God's arrests; his summons is absolute, and must be obeyed; no intreaties can prevail, no bribe suspend, no method prevent the execution of the sentence gone forth. *Neither hath he power in the day of death; then the strong men bow themselves, and friends and physicians help in vain: and this must be, sooner or later, the lot of all, for there is no discharge in that war; we must conflict with this terrible foe; nor gold, nor tears, nor struggling avail; death will not quit his hold. And as the most holy are not exempt from the common lot of mortality, and must pass in common with others through the gate of the grave (though the property of death is changed): neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it; all their craft, their cunning, their authority, their wealth, the fruits of their wickedness, profit not in this day of wrath, but will rather hasten their ruin.*

3dly, To support the sufferers under tyrannical rulers, Solomon,

1. Remarks, among the observations that he had made under the sun, their way and end. *There is a time when one man ruleth over another to his own hurt, or to his hurt; either the hurt of the persons oppressed by tyrants, whose liberty and property are invaded, and their peace disturbed; or to the hurt of the oppressors themselves, who, filling up the measure of their iniquities, bring down upon their heads the divine judgments. For the day of the wicked is coming: so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy, had lived in office, and kept their posts of honour to the last, and were interred with great pomp and splendour, attended in the most solemn manner by the Priests and Levites; as the words may be rendered, they came and walked from the holy place; but how poor is all this! when death stamps vanity upon them, they lie down in the dust as the beggar, where no pomp can follow them, and their detested names are forgotten, and buried in oblivion, notwithstanding all the pains they had taken to perpetuate them.*

2. He observes the impenitence of men presuming on the patience of God; but reprieves are no pardons, as the sinner will find to his cost. *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, but God, though determined to punish sin, in mercy delays, if perhaps men may repent of their iniquities,—so far is his goodness from leading them, as it ought, to repentance, that they are often (such is man's desperate wickedness!) but the more hardened: therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil; presuming on impunity, they persist in their iniquity. But though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, living many a year in prosperous iniquity, yet ought not the people of God to be uneasy, nor the wicked secure; for mark but the end, and then it will be seen beyond contradiction, (1.) That it shall be well with them*

that

## CHAP. IX.

*Like things happen to good and bad. There is a necessity of death unto men. Comfort is all their portion in this life. God's providence ruleth over all. Wisdom is better than strength.*

**F**OR all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and

that fear God; it shall be surely so, notwithstanding any appearances to the contrary: I know it, and speak from the fullest conviction and observation; it shall be well with them who fear God above man, and make it their sole concern to please him; well with them in time, for they shall enjoy his favour and regard, and a happy issue out of all their afflictions; well with them in eternity, when the reward of glory shall be bestowed upon them. But (2.) it shall not be well with the wicked, his days shall be passed in vanity, his death be terrible, and after death a miserable eternity receive him: neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, so swiftly passing, short of what he expected, at least short of the life of glory, because he feareth not before God, which is the great cause of all his wickedness, and the root of his impotence.

4thly, It has been of old a matter of stumbling and difficulty, to behold the righteous afflicted, and the wicked in affluence. But,

1. We must not be surprised at the sight. It is a part of this world's vanity to see the just suffering, as if they had been wicked; and the ungodly prospering, as if they had been righteous. But God has wise ends to answer in these, as they seem to us, myterious dispensations of his providence. He will have his children know that this is not their rest: we must look forward to eternity; there the mystery will be explained, and God's wisdom, justice, grace, and love therein acknowledged.

2. Since all below is so poor and empty, it is wise to make the best of it that we can. Then I commended mirth, holy cheerfulness and serenity; joy in what we possess, and contentment under what we want: to use with sobriety and thankfulness the creatures of God, is all the comfort that we can expect from every thing below. And as this is all we can get by our labour under the sun, herein ought we to abide all our days: they are few and evil, and shortly must end. Let us, therefore, correspond with the Divine Providence, and accommodate ourselves to the will of God.

3. We should be satisfied to be ignorant, where God has set bounds to our researches. Solomon had applied his heart to know wisdom, to investigate the nature and causes of things, and to see the business that is done upon the earth, all the labours of men, or the works of divine providence; and day and night, with restless toil, he pursued his inquiries; but, after all, he confesses how little he knew. His way is in the sea, unfathomably deep, and his footsteps in the great waters, unsearchable; and if he, who was the wisest of all the sons of men, make such an acknowledgment, they who come after him may well despair: be he never so curious, inquisitive, indefatigable, day and night in the inquiry, yet he shall not find it: yea,

the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them.

2 All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that fa-

though he be wise, and may think to know it, by taking some new and untried method of investigating the secrets of nature and providence, yet shall he not be able to find it; an impenetrable veil is stretched over many things: he who set bounds to the sea has set bounds to the human understanding, and has said, Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther: to attempt to exceed these bounds, would only prove the arrogance of folly, and end in disappointment.

## CHAP. IX.

Ver. 1. No man knoweth either love or hatred] Yet no man knoweth what he should either love or hate. This being mentioned in an inquiry concerning the choice which a man ought to make of a certain course of life preferably to another, the most obvious sense is that whereby love and hatred are supposed to be metonymically taken for the objects of either; for, in making a choice you must consider what you should love or set your affections upon. But I do not see by what figure those words can be understood of the manner in which God stands affected towards men. His attributes are sufficiently known for any body to conclude with certainty, that he loves the righteous, and hates the workers of iniquity; and, as to particular persons, every man has within himself the testimony of his own conscience, which he has a right to look upon as the evidence of God (1 John iii. 21.), and whereby he may be informed whether he deserves love or hatred. But for a man who looks no further than this earthly dispensation, and whose inducement to a choice must arise from the prospect of happiness only here below, it may be a matter of doubt whether unhappy virtue deserves to be chosen before seemingly prosperous vice. All that is before him is vanity; and therefore, it is hard for him to know what he should either love or hate, as he does not find that either a virtuous or a vicious course is constantly rewarded or punished in this world. This interpretation may be confirmed from what is said of the dead, ver. 6. that their love, hatred, and envy are perished; which may conveniently enough be understood of the objects of those passions. Desvœux.

Ver. 3. This is an evil among all things] This is an evil in all that happeneth under the sun, that the fate of all is alike; and also that the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil. Nay, they love that while they live which hath nothing but a fair appearance, and after that they go to the dead. They love vanities; they set their heart upon that which appears to them to be love-worthy; and as they walk, according to David's phrase, Ps. xxxix. 6. in a vain show, they may be said to love that show, that appearance, that shadow of beauty, which strikes them as much as if it had the greatest solidity

crificeth not: as *is* the good, so *is* the sinner; and he that sweareth, as *he* that feareth an oath.

3 This *is* an evil among all *things* that are done under the sun, that *there is* one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness *is* in their heart while they live, and after that *they go* to the dead.

4 ¶ For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion.

5 For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have

they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

6 Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any *thing* that is done under the sun.

7 ¶ Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.

8 Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment.

9 Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity,

solidity in it. See Desvoeux, p. 390. We have from ver. 15. of the preceding chapter, to the present verse, the *second instance*, (see on chap. viii. ver. 14.) which is that of the unjust preference generally given to this life, or rather, to the condition of those who enjoy it, above the condition of the dead. The injustice of that preference has been already proved, chap. vi. 3—6. But the sacred orator here resumes the same subject, particularly to shew that our mistake on this point is not owing so much to our proceeding upon wrong principles, as to our not minding the certainty of a future state. To this effect he relates the two principal reasons which may be alleged in support of that preference, and allows both to be true in fact. In the mean time, he takes notice that in this very life which we are so fond of, we are at a loss how to place our affections; and we are so because we stop at what passes within our observation in this world, and go no farther. A strong confirmation of the main argument; and a strong presumption that we were not originally made for this world only! However, as this last observation is placed between the two reasons assigned for the preference given to life, the thread of the reasoning is thereby made more difficult to be followed, which induced me to give this previous notice. It is true, that earthly things can afford nothing better than the present fruition of what our benevolent Creator puts in our power to possess. Nay, this is so certain, that no other reason can be assigned why God Almighty should have made those things wherein we take comfort, except as the allay of all our toil during our abode in a world wherein he hath placed us, ch. viii. 15. Men might be sufficiently convinced of this; yet so few act agreeably to their conviction in that respect; so few allow themselves time to rest from their labour, and to enjoy the fruit thereof, that this cannot be the only or the ultimate design of Providence. This appears farther from the seeming confusion which prevails in the world with respect to the recompensing of virtue and vice; ver. 16, 17. For, whereas one would expect from the hand of a righteous God, a distribution of good and evil proportionable to the conduct of every individual, we find that the fate of the virtuous man and that of the wicked is alike, to all outward appearance. Hence it is, that with respect to moral, as well as to natural things, men, in general, scarcely know what they should either love or hate, and

are mostly determined by their corrupt passions with respect to the former, and by mere appearances with respect to the latter. This is their case during their life, and death generally overtakes them before they rectify their notions, chap. ix. 1—3.

Ver. 4. *For to him that is joined to all the living, there is hope*] And surely, whoever is in society, with all the living hath hope. *For a living dog hath a better chance than a dead lion.* The last sentence may be literally rendered thus: *Good shall rather happen to a living dog than to a dead lion*; which is the foundation of hope expressed in the words immediately preceding. It is very evident, that Solomon speaks in these verses solely of a man's state with respect to this world; not denying or affirming any thing concerning his state or expectations in the next.

Ver. 6. *Also their love, &c.*] We have from ver. 4. to the present, the *second reason*. It is certain, that the dead are excluded from any participation, not only of the pleasure of this world, but likewise of all affairs belonging to it. The most unfortunate in the world may hope to see a happy change in their circumstances; at least they know that death shall put an end to all their troubles: but the dead have no sort of knowledge of what passes in this world; their expectations with respect to it are buried with them; and there is neither reward for, nor scarce a remembrance of their actions. No regard is paid to what they loved, or hated, or envied. The influence of their passions and affections over human affairs is at an end, ver. 4—6. Upon this double ground, viz. the consideration of earthly enjoyments, and the impossibility that the dead should partake of them, is grounded the preference expressed in the vulgar saying, *a living dog hath better hopes, or a better chance, than a dead lion.* Our author, who has always an eye to useful conclusions, cannot resolve to part with the above-mentioned facts, without suggesting two right inferences which men ought to draw from them. See on ver. 9, 10.

Ver. 9. *For that is thy portion*] *For she is thy portion, &c.* From the 7th to this verse we have the *first inference*. We must not reject the use of what God has given us for our portion in this world. The usefulness of earthly things would not cease with this short life, if it had not been our bounteous Maker's will that we should use them while they are within our reach. Their being given in common to the good and to the wicked, must not make us imagine that

which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity : for that *is* thy portion in *this* life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun.

10 Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might ; for *there is* no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

11 ¶ I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race *is* not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong ; neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding ; nor yet favour to men of skill : but time and chance happeneth to them all.

12 For man also knoweth not his time : as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and

as the birds that are caught in the snare ; so *are* the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.

13 ¶ This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it *seemed* great unto me :

14 *There was* a little city, and few men within it ; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it :

15 Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city ; yet no man remembered that same poor man.

16 Then said I, Wisdom *is* better than strength : nevertheless, the poor man's wisdom *is* despised, and his words are not heard.

17 The words of wise *men are* heard in

that we should become less acceptable to him by using them. A due sense of God's always approving our conduct when it is agreeable to Scripture and reason, must be a sufficient preservative against such notions.

*Ver. 10. In the grave whither thou goest.] In the abode of the dead whither thou goest. See Peters on Job, p. 324. We have here the second inference. Whatever may be the use of other faculties to be acquired in another state, since those we now have are talents entrusted with us only for a time, it becomes us to avail ourselves of the present opportunity, and to use them to the best purposes that we can before we are divested of them.*

*Ver. 11. I returned, and saw under the sun.] I considered again, and I observed under the sun.*

*Ver. 12. When it falleth suddenly upon them.] By sudden accidents. The third proof, in support of the third proposition, is taken from those wrong judgments which are known to be such only by the event ; but which must have appeared very probable before. These are brought under two heads. I. In ver. 11 and 12. it is highly probable that the end will be attained by using such means as are the best adapted to it. Yet experience testifies that this is not always the case : success generally depends upon a certain concurrence of circumstances, which it is not in the power of man to procure, or upon seizing an opportunity, which he is so far from knowing, that, like the fishes and birds, he is apt to mistake that for a favourable one which proves most dangerous to him. Thus he often runs to his utter destruction, at the very time when he imagines himself in a successful and most infallible pursuit of happiness.*

*Ver. 15. There was found in it a poor wise man.] An experienced wise man ; and so at the end of the verse. II. We have the second head in ver. 13—15. Our expectations are not less liable to disappointment with respect to those advantages which are considered as infallible consequences of certain actions, without being directly intended by the person concerned, who may be supposed to have a nobler motive in his eye. This our author proves by a single instance, propounded in the form of a parable.*

A wise experienced man found means to deliver his country from impending ruin. Who would not imagine that immortal praise would have been this man's reward ? Yet the contrary happened ; and the danger was no sooner over than the deliverer was forgotten. This serves for a transition to the author's fourth and last proof, which is taken from the little regard that is generally paid to wisdom, notwithstanding its acknowledged excellency. He alleges three instances of that ill-judged disregard. See on the following verses.

*Ver. 16. Then said I, Wisdom is better, &c.] Then said I, Wisdom is preferable to power: Yet the wisdom of this experienced man is despised, and his deeds are not mentioned. We have here the first instance. Though wisdom is, in its own nature, much superior to strength and power, (as plainly appears from the foregoing example, wherein strength was wanting, and yet a wonderful deliverance wrought by wisdom alone) yet it is not minded, when the possessor of it has nothing to recommend him besides his abilities and services, and his best actions are soon forgotten.*

*Ver. 17. The words of wise men are heard in quiet.] The words of wise men are more minded among people of a sedate disposition, than the cry of war raised by a man in authority among the inconstant multitude. By this translation, the opposition designed by the author is preserved, as well as the allusion to the condition of a small town mentioned in the preceding parable. See Desvœux, p. 420.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Solomon had been applying his mind with the greatest diligence to the study of wisdom ; he had deliberately weighed and considered the particulars mentioned in the foregoing chapters, and the end that he proposed was, *to declare all this* for the edification of others. One difficulty in the ways of Providence he had observed, respecting the distribution of afflictions and prosperity to the righteous and the wicked ; they who deserve least possessing often the greatest affluence ; and they who are the excellent of the earth pining under sickness, distress, and indigence. Now, though he could not fully resolve

quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools.

18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war : but one sinner destroyeth much good.

resolve *this work of God*, the method of divine procedure; yet the following observations may serve to give much satisfaction to the children of God.

1. *That the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God*; he has a peculiar regard to them, and all their affairs; he knows their works, and approves them.

2. *That no man knoweth either love or hatred, by all that is before them*; the different outward circumstances of men, which occur in the course of divine providence, are no proofs either of God's love or hatred: or, *neither love nor hatred man knows*, so deceitful are appearances; the professions of love are often insincere, and there is hatred sometimes entertained where we expected the warmest regard; *but all things are before them*, known to the Eternal Three, from whom nothing is hid, nothing is secret.

3. *That all things come alike to all*; there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; yet are their characters widely different: those are good, renewed by divine grace; clean, as washed in the Blood of sprinkling, devout in their services, and fearing an oath, cautious how they swear, and seriously and religiously observant of their engagements: these are unclean, their nature impure, and their iniquities not washed away by the atoning Blood; profane, living in the habitual neglect of the ordinances of God; sinners, openly violating the laws of God and man; swearers, rash, blaspheming, perjured. Now, that so little difference should be put between persons of such opposite characters, may seem an evil among all things that are done under the sun: and that there is one event unto all, is enough to harden the wicked into atheism, and may shake the confidence of the just: but, though the dispensations of God's providence be the same, the design of them is vastly different; the same event is made a favour of life unto life to the one, and a favour of death unto death to the other; so that God will at last appear just, and all will be made to own the righteousness of his government.

4. The wicked, notwithstanding any prosperity which they may enjoy, are miserable both in life and death. *The heart of the sons of men is full of evil*; observing this similarity of events to all, they infer that God hath forsaken the earth, and therefore give an unrestrained indulgence to every appetite: and *madness is in their heart while they live*; their delights are but a madman's dreams; they are insensible of their real wretched state, and know not the eternal ruin to which they are hastening: and *after that they go to the dead*; death closes the scene, their pomp cannot descend with them into the grave; they are numbered with the transgressors, and perish without hope eternally.

2dly, The advantages of life are set forth: happy they who improve them!

1. While there is life, there is hope. Whatever be a man's condition, either temporal or spiritual, however deplorable and unhappy, it may change or improve. The chief of sinners may, through grace, quickly become the chief of saints, and a living dog is better than a dead lion; the meanest beggar alive may be made useful, and enjoy comforts of which the mightiest monarch dead is incapable.

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2. The certainty of approaching death is a warning to prepare for it: now is the moment of opportunity; and the living, who know that they shall die, are called upon continually to be ready. It will be too late shortly, for as the tree falleth it must lie.

3. After death, this world is no more to us. *The dead know not any thing*, nothing that passes here below, or how it is with those whom they have left behind; *neither have they any more a reward*, cannot enjoy any longer the fruit of their labours upon earth; *for the memory of them is forgotten* among the living; in a few years, their very memorial sinks into utter oblivion, and it is not known that they have ever been. *Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy is now perished*, death causes every endeared relation to cease, and terminates all quarrels; when we are removed from the world, neither the persons nor transactions in it any more affect us: *neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun*, the worldling's portion ends with his expiring breath; he can carry nothing away with him: and the gracious soul, however rich his portion in heaven, then quits whatever was near or dear to him on earth.

4. The inference that he would draw from hence is this; to make use of the moment which is allotted us, to enjoy with thankfulness the blessings that God bestows; and in our place and station give all diligence to glorify God, and make our calling and election sure. The temperate use and enjoyment of the good creatures of God are so far from being criminal, that they are enjoined us, as *our portion under the sun*, ver. 9. And since all our days here are but vanity, the greater need have we to make the best of them: to eat and drink temperately, but with gladness of heart; to be sordid neither in diet nor apparel, but to live according to our station and circumstances, and enjoy the relations of life with which the Lord has blessed us. And God, far from forbidding us these comforts, *accepteth thy works*; a thankful heart in the use of the blessings that he bestows, is a daily sacrifice. Only amid our enjoyments, we must not forget the occupations which call for our diligence and labour. *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do*, the duties of our station, and especially the great concern of religion, *do it with thy might*, with zeal and vigour, in opposition to every difficulty and discouragement; *for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest*; it will be too late there to discover the error of our ways, and impossible to amend them. To-day, therefore, whilst it is called to-day, up and be doing; *the night cometh, when no man can work*.

3dly, Though diligence is our duty, yet the issue of all events is in the hands of God, and things often turn out strangely contrary to appearances. This the preacher had observed, and warns us of, that we may not be too sanguine and confident.

1. The strongest presumptions often disappoint us. *The race is not to the swift*; they stumble in their course, or, too secure of success, loiter, and are distanced: *nor the battle to the strong*; the most formidable armies have been often defeated by a handful of men; and the mightiest

## CHAP. X.

*Observations on wisdom and folly. On riot, slothfulness, and money. Men's thoughts of kings ought to be reverent.*

**D**EAD flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour; *so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour.*

tiest champions, as Goliath, have fallen before the arm of a stripling: *neither yet bread to the wise, who frequently want, while fools wallow in affluence; nor yet riches to men of understanding, who, though ingenious in their professions, and most likely to succeed in the world, are strangely neglected, and others of no abilities preferred before them; nor yet favour to men of skill, whose parts and genius, instead of engaging the esteem of others, sometimes provoke their envy; and many, instead of exalting them, seek to depress and disgrace them: but time and chance happeneth to them all, far different is the event from human probability.*

2. We are frequently unable to guard against misfortunes. *Man knoweth not his time, what calamities are before him, when his day of evil shall come, or how to avoid it; but like the fishes taken in an evil net, and as birds caught in the snare, so unexpectedly do we often find a snare in what promised the greatest satisfaction, and see ourselves suddenly involved in trouble, where we least suspected danger. We need be ready for every event, prepare for changes, expect disappointments, die daily, and then the day of evil shall never surprize us unawares.*

4thly, Though the wise are not always successful, yet usually they are so; and wisdom is most necessary to the management of our affairs, notwithstanding the disappointments from which the most prudent are not exempted.

1. Solomon gives an instance of the advantages of wisdom; and the story might have been a real matter of fact which fell under his observation; or it may be a parable, intended to set the subject he treated of in a more striking light. *There was a little city, and few men within it, consequently less able to sustain the attacks of a besieger; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it; so that the ruin of it seemed inevitable, and resistance vain: now there was found in it a poor wise man, who, though so deserving of honour and advancement, had been neglected; yet, like a true patriot, in time of danger, he stepped forth a volunteer in the service of his ungrateful countrymen, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet, highly as he had merited, he found no recompence, no man remembered that same poor man, so ill are kindnesses, done to men, often requited: God will not be so unmindful of the works of faith and labours of love. Some explain this mystically of Christ, and, no doubt, the application is beautifully apposite: The little city is the church of God, separated by walls of salvation from the world around it; the members of it are few in number, and utterly unable to defend themselves against their spiritual enemies. The great king who besieges it, is Satan, the prince of the power of the air, under whom the armies*

2 A wife man's heart is at his right hand; but a fool's heart is at his left.

3 Yea also when he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool.

4 If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for yielding pacifieth great offences.

of earth and hell are leagued against God's people; by open attacks (of temptation and persecution), and by secret sap (of errors and delusions), he seeks to open a way into the fortress. The poor man, who, in this desperate case, steps forth, is Christ, filled with all the treasures of divine wisdom; and by his counsel the devices of Satan are disappointed, the souls of men rescued from ruin, and the faithful saved with an everlasting salvation: yet those who saw him in the flesh never thought him capable of such a transaction, and rejected him; and even after what he has done, the most of those who are in the pale of his church by profession, give him not the glory of his work, and ascribe no praise to this great Deliverer, but live and die in an ungrateful neglect of their great Benefactor.

2. The inferences which the wise man draws from hence are, that *wisdom is better than strength, and able to extricate us from difficulties, baffling superior force, and foiling the weapons of war. Nevertheless, we may still observe in general, that the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard; such are the prejudices of the world against the poor, that many a bright genius lives and dies in obscurity. Some few, indeed, may overcome the common prepossession, and learn to value merit, however depressed in station: by them the words of wise men are heard in quiet; they attend silently their sage instructions: or the humble, modest, and diffident manner in which the wise deliver their opinion, weighs more with them, than the cry of him that ruleth among fools, whose pride on his station makes him noisy and blustering; but the thoughtful hearer prefers the force of the poor man's reasoning to all the pomp of sounding words displayed by the other.*

3. As much good as one poor wise man doth, so much evil proceeds from one sinner; *he destroyeth much good: all the gifts which by nature he possesses, and the abundance bestowed on him by Providence, are vilely perverted and abused; he is the plague of his family, his city, his country; his ill example is contagious; and his study is, to counteract the influence of good laws, or good advice: and through the corruption of the human heart, ever prone to evil, his endeavours are but too frequently successful.*

## CHAP. X.

*Ver. 1. Dead flies cause, &c.] The smell arising from the perfume of the perfumer is infected by dead flies; so is the value of wisdom and reputation by a little folly. See Desvoeux, and Bishop Lowth's third Prelection.*

*Ver. 3. Yea, also when he that is a fool, &c.] Nay, by the way wherein a fool walketh, his heart faileth him, and saith to every one, This is a fool.*

*Ver. 4. If the spirit of the ruler rise up] If the anger of the*



5 There is an evil *which* I have seen under the sun, as an error *which* proceedeth from the ruler :

6 Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in low place.

7 I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth.

8 He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it : and whoſo breaketh an hedge, a ſerpent ſhall

bite him.

9 Whoſo removeth ſtones, ſhall be hurt therewith ; and he that cleaveth wood, ſhall be endangered thereby.

10 If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then muſt he put to more ſtrength : but wiſdom is profitable to direct.

11 Surely the ſerpent will bite without enchantment ; and a babbler is no better.

*the ruler ſhould be kindled againſt thee, do not reſign thy place ; for power kept in thy hands will make pacification for great offences.* From the 17th verſe of the preceding chapter to the preſent, we have the *ſecond inſtance*. The excellency of wiſdom is ſo well known, that, however fond the ſilly lovers of novelties maybe of hearing a war proclaimed, they will be ſtill ſonder of hearing the ſpeeches of a wiſe man, when their paſſions are cool. Wiſdom is certainly preferable to the greateſt exploits of the moſt famous warrior ; yet no allowance is made for human frailties to excuſe one who has ſo much got the better of them as to deſerve the title of a wiſe man. A ſingle fault of his is ſufficient to ſpoil, in the opinion of mankind, all the good that he has done. They rank him among the fools, notwithstanding it is acknowledged on all hands, nay, declared in ſeveral proverbial ſentences, that there is an eſſential difference between the wiſe and the fool : a difference which the fool betrays at every ſtep he takes, and by his very gait ; and which, therefore, ought not to be laid aſide and diſregarded upon a ſingle inſtance of a man's deviating from his right principles, ver. 2, 3. Here is annexed a caution (ver. 4.) given to any wiſe man, if he ſhould fall under the diſpleaſure of his prince on account of thoſe ſmall errors which were juſt before likened to a dead fly falling into a box of precious perfumes. He muſt not, upon the firſt intimation of his maſter's anger, give up his employments. Then he would become an inconfiderable man ; whereas, whiſt he is in poſſeſſion of them, it may be for the prince's own intereſt to make up matters with him, even though he was guilty of much greater faults than what he has really committed. \*

*Ver. 7. I have ſeen ſervants upon horſes, &c.]* From the fifth to this verſe we have the *third inſtance*. Princes, whoſe character depends upon the behaviour of thoſe whom they employ, as much as upon their own, are apt to commit great miſtakes in the choice of their miniſters, when they are not determined in that choice by the known, or at leaſt rationally preſumed abilities of thoſe whom they raiſe to dignities and power. This was not an uncommon caſe in the eaſtern abſolute monarchies, where the bare caprice of the monarch was ſufficient to raiſe from the duſt, and to ſet over provinces, a man of neither words nor experience, and to lay thoſe aſide, who, from their birth, education, and circumſtances, had opportunities to acquire ſuch wiſdom as is requiſite to diſcharge properly ſo important a truſt. See Zech. ix. 9.

*Ver. 8. And whoſo breaketh an hedge] And whoſo forceth his way through a hedge.* See the *Observations*, p. 217. To ſhew that ſuch a choice as that mentioned in the 7th

verſe is not only an evil, but likewise a great folly, our author obſerves, firſt, that the inconveniences ariſing from it do not affect the people only, which might be a conſideration of little weight with a ſelfiſh deſpotic monarch ; but that they reach the prince himſelf. This he proves by four proverbial ſentences, in this and the following verſe ; the general meaning of which is, that the firſt author of any miſchief or improper meaſure is likely to be the firſt ſufferer by it.

*Ver. 10. If the iron be blunt] If an iron inſtrument be blunt, though the edge be not quite off, and he who wanteth to make uſe of it increaſeth his ſtrength, ſkill is more profitable to ſucceed : or it may be rendered, If an axe be blunt, though the edge is not quite off, then the workman ſhall exert his utmoſt ſtrength, and ſkill remaineth to make him ſucceed.* Thus ſkill or experience is repreſented as a mean which is left to procure ſucceſs when all others fail. Nothing can be more agreeable to Solomon's deſign than ſuch a notion, eſpecially as it carries an intimation of the neceſſity of a ſuperior genius and application in a prince who employs unſkilful miniſters, that he may be able to ſupply their want of experience. See Deſvœux.

*Ver. 11. Surely, the ſerpent will bite without enchantment] If the ſerpent biteth becauſe he is not enchanted, then nothing remaineth to the maſter of enchantments.* The two proverbial ſimiles made uſe of in this and the preceding verſe, to ſhew the inconveniencies ariſing from an ill-judged choice of thoſe who are intruſted with the adminiſtration of public affairs, are very fit for the purpoſe : but the manner in which Solomon paſſes from the laſt to the main ſubject, for the ſake of which they had been alleged, looks very abrupt in all the verſions. I think it is quite otherwiſe in the original, and have endeavour'd ſo to expreſs it ; by which means we have a perfect connection between the two members of the ſentence. *If the ſerpent biteth becauſe [either through the neglect, or through the unſkilfulneſs, of him whoſe buſineſs it is to prevent it] he is not enchanted, then there is no occaſion for a maſter of enchantments ; or there remaineth nothing for him to do.* The ſimile by this conſtruction becomes applicable, with the greateſt imaginable propriety, to the ſubject which Solomon had in hand ; and I cannot help conjecturing from this propriety, that it was a proverbial ſentence, commonly uſed in political matters, to ſignify that it was needleſs to appoint miniſters to negotiate with a ſubtle enemy, repreſented by the ſerpent, except they were ſuch as to be able to gain their point with him. I muſt add, that the Greek, Syriac, and Arabic interpreters, who had a more exact knowledge of the cuſtoms of thoſe times than we can pretend to, ſeem

12 The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself.

13 The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness: and the end of his talk is mischievous madness.

14 A fool also is full of words: a man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell him?

15 The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city.

16 ¶ Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning!

17 Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness!

18 ¶ By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through.

19 ¶ A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry; but money answereth all things.

to have understood this place as we do, and several modern interpreters of note are of the same opinion. Now I conceive that the transition from this simile to the abilities of a wise or experienced man in the next verse, lies in the affinity of signification between the words which he had made use of to signify the charmer's office, and those which he employs to describe the eloquence of the wise. The word *שחל* *lachaſh*, *enchantment*, has a double signification; and takes in both the charms of magic, and the charms of eloquence: see *Iſai. iii. 3.* So that, instead of saying, *The words of a wise man's mouth are* *שחל* *chein*, *grace*, he might as well have said that they are *שחל* *lachaſh*, without any alteration in the sense. The expression, *master of the tongue*, as it is read in the margin of our Bibles, is likewise applicable to a man who knows how to manage his words as occasion requires, and thereby to make himself acceptable to every body. Thus, from a master of the tongue by office, who was not really master of what belonged to his employment, (*viz.* *שחל* *lachaſh*), to one who really had that accomplishment, or rather an accomplishment of the same denomination, the transition was easy and natural. I do not know but that the allusion to the *enchanter*, in opposition to the *wise man*, is still carried on in what Solomon says of the fool, a man without experience, in opposition to the same, *ver. 12.* *The lips of a fool will swallow up himself*; at least the fool here spoken of is very like the charmer mentioned by the son of Sirach, *Ecclef. xii. 13.* whom nobody pities when he is bit by the very serpent that he should have enchanted. *Deſvœux.*

*Ver. 14.* *A man cannot tell what shall be*] *A man knoweth not what hath been.*

*Ver. 15.* *The labour of the foolish, &c.*] *He will weary himself with foolish labour, not knowing how to go to the city.* From the 10th to this verse, Solomon proceeds to shew that such a choice as that mentioned on *ver. 7.* answers no purpose; as he who employs unfit ministers makes the government heavier to himself, instead of getting any ease, which is the natural design of appointing ministers, or subordinate instruments of government. This is again made out from proverbial sentences, the meaning and application of which to the subject in hand deserves a more particular explanation. The defect of a blunt axe may be in some measure supplied by the strength, and more by the skill of the workman; but it will certainly require greater efforts than would be necessary if that tool had a

sharp edge, *ver. 10.* Likewise the business of the government must be much more difficult for the prince himself, let him be ever so capable, when he makes use of ignorant ministers. Again; it is not enough for a man in place to do no harm; he must do good. Why should the state be at the charge of maintaining a charmer, if that officer, through either neglect or incapacity, does not prevent serpents from being hurtful? *ver. 11.* Men who have been bred to public affairs are used to speak in such a manner as to ingratiate themselves with the hearers; but he whose education was never intended to fit him for public business will rather make himself unacceptable by his speeches, and involve in his own ruin the affairs with which he is charged, *ver. 12.* In a council he may talk a great deal at random; but as he has no knowledge in history, nor experience of his own, no one can make him sensible of the bad consequences which are likely to be the result of his measures. If his intentions be right, he will take a great deal of trouble to do good; but all to no purpose, *ver. 13, 14.* He will weary himself, like a man who wants to go to a town, the road to which he is not acquainted with. Wherefore he foolishly walks on, without knowing whether he advances toward his journey's end, or goes astray from it, *ver. 15.*

*Ver. 16.* *Woe to thee, O land, &c.*] *Woe to thee, O land, whose king was born to be a servant, and whose princes eat early in the morning!* The propriety of this version is best seen by its opposition to the subsequent verses.

*Ver. 18, 19.* *By much slothfulness, &c.*] *Through slothfulness the building will decay, and through idleness of hands the house will drop; ver. 19. while they make feasts to divert themselves, and spend their life in making themselves merry with wine and oil; money supplying with them the want of every thing else.* Lastly, Solomon concludes this proof, from *ver. 16.* (*see on ch. ix. 15.*) with a moving explanation upon the unhappy state of a nation, whose fate it is to be governed by men of such a stamp as he had before described; and, to make it more conspicuous, he opposes it to the happiness of another nation, whose king, being descended from noble ancestors, may be presumed to have had a proper education, will imitate those virtues through which his forefathers acquired their nobility, and will make use of ministers or princes like himself; *ver. 16, 17.* The several mischiefs and disorders before complained of, are more likely to happen under the reign of an upstart king, than

20 ¶ Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bed-chamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the

voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.

than of an hereditary one; as he does not only want experience and education, but is also often necessitated to support an ill-gotten authority by the worst means. Those whom he employs under him must probably be such as have helped him to the throne, or been his friends in his former life; men of no worth, who will mind nothing but eating and drinking from morning till night. While such men as these imagine that their new-gotten wealth may supply the want of all qualifications forever, the constitution must suffer from their neglect and incapacity, as much as a house, the roof of which is not repaired, through the slothfulness of the owner, ver. 18, 19.

*Ver. 20. Curse not the king] Speak not evil of the king, though thou shouldst know reason for it; nay, speak not evil of the rich, not even in the recesses of thy bed-chamber; for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and a winged bird shall tell the matter.* To the last instance, whereof the last proof consists, a very seasonable caution is here subjoined. Though, from the very considerations just touched upon, thinking people may often have reason to be dissatisfied with the government that they live under, yet they must not traduce either the king or other persons in high station; for that can never be done so secretly, but they may be soon apprized of it, by means which the speakers least think of. Here an end might have been put to this discourse, as the sacred orator has gone through the three propositions wherewith he intended to support the main conclusion which he had in view; and nothing seemed to remain, but to draw that conclusion. But before he came to it, he thought proper to add four precepts, three of which have a particular retrospect to the forementioned propositions, and the last seems to be nothing else but a commendation of this useful work. See the next chapter.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The purest white the soonest receives a foil; therefore,

1. They who have the reputation of wisdom, and make the highest professions of religion, should be the most exact and careful in their conduct, seeing that the eyes of men are upon them, ready to discern, and willing to expose, their smallest infirmities. *As dead flies give the sweetest ointment into which they fall an ill favour, so doth a little folly, an inadvertent step, an unguarded word, or a sinful compliance, expose him to reproach that is in reputation for wisdom and honour:* the world will make no allowances for human infirmity, or the force of temptation; but, looking with envy on superior excellence, are happy to seize every shadow of abuse to degrade to their own level those who excel them, and to triumph that they are no better than themselves. May it make us, therefore, more circumspect in our words and works, when so many wait for our halting!

2. The wise are dexterous in the management of their affairs, their heart is at their right hand; in difficulties they have presence of mind to extricate themselves, and, in all their transactions, execute with vigour what they plan with

prudence: *but a fool's heart is at his left, he is awkward in his business, absurd in his contrivances, and, if put a step out of his way, confused and at a loss: nay, he has not sense enough to conceal his folly; it appears in his very gait, in his conversation, in all his transactions; and, whoever makes the most cursory remarks upon his conduct, must be convinced that he is a fool.*

2dly, They who would learn to rule, or to obey, must hear these lessons of instruction.

1. Let subjects learn to submit. *If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, whether through any real provocation given, or misrepresentation made by others, leave not thy gait, quit not his service in passion, nor throw up thy employments as being ill used, much less renounce allegiance and loyalty; but wait a while, and the storm will blow over, or an opportunity be afforded to vindicate thy injured innocence; for yielding pacifieth great offences, and gives time for wrath to subside, which anger and opposition would but exasperate, and render more implacable.*

2. Let rulers take heed whom they prefer to places of trust and honour; for it is a great evil, yet a common error, through favour, recommendation, or partiality, without considering the qualifications of the persons, to put those in office who are most unfit to govern. *Folly is set in great dignity, men who are weak and unable to discharge the duties of their station, or wicked and disposed to abuse their power and influence: and the rich, men of character and fortune, who were in a great measure removed by their circumstances from the temptation of doing a mean thing, or men of grace and piety, sit in low place, neglected and slighted. I have seen servants upon horses, those of a mercenary spirit and low extraction, exalted, as the tools of an iniquitous administration; and princes walking as servants upon the earth, degraded and insulted by these upstart minions of power.*

3. Let both prince and people beware of innovations, and keep within their due bounds; lest, turning prerogative into tyranny, or liberty into licentiousness, the fatal consequences should (too late) be felt and lamented. For as he that diggeth a pit, is in danger of falling into it; he who breaks a hedge, of being stung by the viper which is concealed in it; he that removeth stones from a wall, of being crushed by its fall; and he that cleaveth wood, of being hurt by the chips which fly from the stroke; so where princes turn oppressive and tyrannical, break in upon the liberties of the people, seek to demolish the constitution, render the government arbitrary, and employ force to put their designs into execution; they provoke the people to rise up against them. As, on the other hand, when factious discontented spirits contrive to bring about a change in the government, would sow discord among the people under pretence of zeal for liberty, would retrench the just rights of the crown, and alter the constitution, they often by their treasonable practices make a halter for themselves, and lawless liberty terminates in abject slavery: *wisdom is therefore profitable to direct,* how both

## CHAP. XI.

*Directions for charity. Death in life, and the day of judgment in the days of youth, are to be thought on.*

**C**AST thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.

both should behave in their stations; and hereby we save ourselves much trouble and damage; as when a tool is sharpened, it works easily; but, when blunt, requires more violence, and the chips fly more dangerously around.

3dly, We have,

1. The evil of a babbling tongue. It is venomous as the poison of a serpent, it stings mortally, *without enchantment, or without a whisper, or hiss, and gives no warning.*

2. The opposition between the words of the foolish and the wife. *The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious, he gives the most favourable character of others; speaks well of those who are in authority over him; seeks some topic of conversation which may be useful, and minister grace to the hearers; none go from his company without an opportunity of being the wiser and better for it: but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself; giving a loose to his tongue, he speaks evil of dignities, involves himself in quarrels, and brings ruin upon himself. The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness; he no sooner opens his lips, than his folly is manifest to all that hear him; and the end of his talk is mischievous madness: he talks himself into a passion, grows abusive and violent, and stops at no mischief. A fool also is full of words, never knows when to have done, and wearies the company with his nonsense; affects to understand every thing, and, though utterly ignorant, engrosses the discourse to himself; and with endless tautologies repeats his trite observations, or vain-gloriously boasts of what he will do, and what he expects hereafter, when even the wisest of men know not what a day may bring forth.*

3. The works of the fool are as fruitless as his words. *The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them; they take the wrong way, and therefore cannot but labour in vain, because he knoweth not how to go to the city; he mistakes the path, though never so obvious, and is bewildered: and this is spiritually true of the infatuated sinner and the self-righteous, who say that they are on the road to the heavenly city, but know not Christ the way; and, therefore, every step they take only removes them farther from the gate of heaven.*

4thly, The happiness or misery of a kingdom greatly depends on the character of its governors. A prince of a weak and childish spirit, unable to guide the reins, or debauched and luxurious, who devotes his time to the service of his lusts and pleasures, neglects public affairs, and consigns them to the management of those who are as weak or wicked as himself, is a curse to the land over which he presides. *But blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, ennobled by the virtues of his royal progenitors, whom he imitates, as well as by the blood derived from them; and thy princes eat in due season for strength, and*

2 Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.

3 If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in

*not for drunkenness, where the subordinate magistrates are wisely chosen of the most virtuous, temperate, and sober; whose continual care is, how to discharge their office, and whom excess never disqualifies for business.*

5thly, We have,

1. The great evil of sloth. *By much slothfulness the building decayeth, no care being taken timely to repair the breaches; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through, mouldering fast to ruin, and falling to the ground. Thus the state suffers under slothful magistrates, and by sloth the soul of the sinner receives irreparable damage.*

2. The secret designs of treason will be detected. *Curse not the king, however ill his conduct may be, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich, the inferior magistrates, even though oppressive, in thy bed-chamber—never, however secretly in thy family, or in the most private club or association: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, their spies are ever within hearing, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter; swift the intelligence of these secret plots shall be conveyed, and the consequence be the destruction of the contrivers.*

## CHAP. XI.

*Ver. 1. Cast thy bread upon the waters] Cast thy corn before the waters, for thou shalt find it, &c. Delvaux observes, the true design of this verse is so plainly pointed out by the context, that interpreters could not avoid seeing that it is an exhortation to benevolence and liberality; yet few of them understood the letter of the metaphor wherein that exhortation is in a manner wrapped up; and the Chaldee paraphrast would not even allow it to be a metaphor; but, through a very extraordinary *synecdoche*, made the surface of the water to mean *poor sailors, whose ships sail on that surface*. It has been observed by several interpreters, that in these words, *cast thy bread upon the face of the waters*, חֵלֶם, which is generally translated *bread*, may as well be translated *corn*: besides other places, where it has that signification, no other construction can be put on it, *Isai. xxviii. 28.* nor in this place neither, if we consider that Solomon makes use of a proverbial metaphorical sentence, which must have a known, rational, literal sense, independently of the remoter moral application. *But to cast one's bread upon the surface of the waters, where it must be either devoured by the fish, or diluted to nothing, before the waves leave it upon the shore, would be a very odd way of providing for futurity; and I doubt whether one who would try the experiment could find his bread again after many days.* But the case is quite otherwise with respect to seed thrown upon the surface of an inundation: when the waters subside, the corn which remains in the mud grows, and is found again *many days after*, at the time of harvest. This is a very rational construction.*

the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.

4 He that observeth the wind, shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds, shall not reap.

5 As thou knowest not what *is* the way of the spirit, nor how the bones *do grow* in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.

6 In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both *shall be*

alike good.

7 ¶ Truly the light *is* sweet, and a pleasant *thing it is* for the eyes to behold the sun.

8 But if a man live many years, *and* rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many. All that cometh *is* vanity.

9 ¶ Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these *things* God will bring thee into judgment.

10 Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart,

construction of Solomon's words, which the judicious Bishop Lowth, in his 10th Prelection, thinks may be illustrated from Pf. civ. 14. But there is another, which, if I am not mistaken, has the advantage of being better connected with the other proverbial sentences, wherein the author has in a manner wrapped up his exhortation; and to which, for that reason, I have given the preference in my translation. The words *על פני אל פני* *al-peni*, upon the faces, are often employed for *לפני* *lipni*, before the faces, to signify, in presence of, or over against; and the two phrases appear to be synonymous in that sense, by comparing Exod. xiv. 2. with Numb. xxxiii. 7. They are so likewise in some places, especially Gen. xxxii. 21. and 2 Sam. xv. 18. in the signification of *before*, with respect to time. Now, why should not *על פני הים* *al-peni bammaim*, in the passage before us, be rendered, *Before the rainy season*? Corn thrown at that time in the ground, which in hot climates is then like dust, may be looked upon as thrown away; and if you consider nothing but the impossibility of its thriving without moisture, it is very natural that you should wait for the wind which will bring clouds and rain (ver. 4.). But the prudent husbandman knows, that in time of drought the clouds are filling, and that as soon as they are full they must pour down rain upon the earth (ver. 3.): therefore he sows the seed in expectation of a crop, which he is not to see immediately, but only after many days. This kind of prudence is that which Solomon recommends with respect to the poor, as may be seen by the whole context.

Ver. 4. *He that observeth the wind, &c.*] The first precept, or advice, contained in ver. 1, 2, 3. has a retrospect to the first proposition; and might be thus expressed, if we were not to make use of figurative language: since the goods of this world are mere vanity, do your best to fix, or to give them what stability they are capable of, with respect to another dispensation, by sharing them with the poor; or, to speak with one who was both greater and wiser than Solomon himself, *Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations.* But our author chose to make use of proverbial sentences, which, together with the advice given, carry an intimation that God Almighty has disposed every

thing in this world in such a manner, that nothing is lost. Corn sown before the rainy season will nevertheless be found afterwards in the harvest time: the vapours emitted from the earth fall again into its bosom; and a tree, though torn from its roots, which seemed to be its strongest security against being carried away, remains for the use of the owner in the very place where the wind blew it down, being no further in the power of the storms. Thus our alms will, under the direction of the same God, have some sort of stability. They will be repaid; perhaps in this world; certainly somewhere. To this precept is added a caution, (ver. 4.) lest, through an over-nice regard to proper opportunities, we should neglect to do good while it is in our power to do it.

Ver. 5, 6. *As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit*] *As thou knowest not which way the wind will blow, nor how the bones are formed in the womb of her who is with child; even so thou knowest not the work of God, who shall do all this; ver. 6. therefore sow thy seed, &c.* The morning and evening, possibly, may signify the early and late season, according to Symmachus's notion, which may very well agree with the original, *Sow thy corn both early and late; do not desist, &c.* The second precept contained in these two verses, and which has a retrospect both to the first and second proposition, as appears by comparing it with the conclusion drawn from both, ch. vi. 10, 11. stands thus: since it is not possible for men to find out the ways of God, and fully to discover whereunto our works and occupations shall tend, by the appointment of Him who is the author of every thing which happens; they must be satisfied to bestow their time and trouble upon that which it appears (by the circumstances wherein they are placed by him) it was his design they should; leaving the success to himself, who alone can tell what it will be, having kept it entirely within his own disposal.

Ver. 8. *But if a man live many years*] *Yet, if a man was to live many years in a continual enjoyment of pleasure, and should remember that the days of darkness shall be many; all that is past is vanity.*

Ver. 9. *In the days of thy youth*] *In the days of thy wisdom.*

Ver. 10. *Therefore remove sorrow*] *And remove sorrow from*

and put away evil from thy flesh; for childhood and youth *are* vanity.

## CHAP. XII.

*The Creator is to be remembered in due time. The preacher's care to edify. The fear of God is the chief antidote of vanity.*

**R**EMEMBER now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days

come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;

2 While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain:

3 In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they

*from thy heart, and put away pain from thy flesh; because this youth, nay, this dawn of light, is but a vapour; Desvœux: who puts a semicolon only at the end of this verse, and connects very properly the first verse of the next chapter with it thus:—and remember thy Creator, &c.]*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The great blessing of abundance, and the proper employment of it, is to use it in relieving the necessities of the indigent.

1. Solomon exhorts to liberality. *Cast thy bread upon the waters*, upon the multitude of poor objects; and, like ships of merchandize, the return made shall amply repay the venture: *for thou shalt find it after many days*; the blessing of God shall often restore it with increase in this world, at least in a better we shall reap the fruits of our benevolence. *Give a portion to seven*, not complaining of the number who seek relief, but *also to eight*; even to as many as through their indigence call for a supply, and our ability enables us to assist; *for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth*, and therefore, instead of making that a reason for withholding the needful assistance, we should be careful to make a good use of what we have while we have it; and what our hand findeth to do, do it with our might.

2. He urges the duty by several considerations taken from the objects around us, and answers the objections which the niggard heart might make.

(1.) *If the clouds be full of rain, they do not reserve their contents, but empty themselves upon the earth*; so should the rich water with their bounty all around them.

(2.) *If a tree fall toward the south or towards the north, either the seed which grows into a tree, or the stock when it is filled, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be*, in the former instance freely producing fruit for those who come to gather it; or, according to the latter, when by death we are cut down as a tree, we can do good no longer; and therefore should now, while we have opportunity, improve the moment: nor should the unworthiness of the object discourage us; if we give in real charity, we shall not lose our reward.

(3.) We must not be deterred by the fears of want which may happen to ourselves; or by any probable future difficulties be discouraged from present duty. If every blast of wind or flying cloud discouraged the husbandman, he would neither sow his ground, nor reap his harvest.

(4.) Though we may not see how God will repay us for what is expended in his service, yet shall it infallibly be done. We know not whence the wind cometh, or

whither it goeth, how the soul is united to the body, or the bones grow in the womb of her that is with child; and a thousand things in the ways of Providence are equally mysterious to us. But though we know not the manner of his operation, we feel and see the effects: and so shall we receive a return from him of what is in charity lent to him.

(5.) We shall finally reap, if we faint not. Our duty is, to labour with indefatigable diligence, and trust God for the success; we know not which of our works of faith and labours of love shall most prosper, whether those of the morning of youth, or the evening of age, and may hope that *both shall be alike good*, watered with the dew of the divine benediction, and producing a plentiful harvest, either in time or in eternity.

2dly, After the many directions given how to live, he proceeds in the conclusion to teach us how to die.

1. He addresses the aged. Those who have lived *many years*, and years of almost uninterrupted prosperity too, rejoicing in them all; to such *the light of life is sweet*, and *a pleasant thing it is to behold the sun*, to be numbered among the living, and enjoy the blessings that God bestows. But the more comforts we have found here, and the longer we have possessed them, the more need we fear, lest inordinate love of life should draw us away from our better hope above; and therefore let such *remember the days of darkness, for they are many*, days of sickness, pain, and infirmity; or days of death, when the body is inclosed in the silent grave, and no more to be found among the living. This should be ever placed in our view, that we may never be secure, or careless, but dying daily, and ready to meet the summons which calls our bodies to their bed of dust, and our souls to the world of spirits.

2. He addresses the youth. *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth*; which may be considered, as before, as his serious advice, to take the most comfortable enjoyment of the blessings of life, in such a way, as to be ever ready to answer at the judgment-seat of Christ: or the words may be regarded as a pointed irony, expressive of the vanity and misery of indulging youthful lusts, for which so solemn a reckoning must be quickly made. *Rejoice*, if such wretched gratifications can afford a drop of satisfaction, and *let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth*, pass all the jocund hours in mirth and gaiety, and *walk in the ways of thy heart*, keeping it back from no joy, but giving a boundless scope to the indulgence of every appetite; and *in the sight of thine eyes*, let them wander unrestrained on every pleasing object: *but know thou*, however lightly it is thought of, however fadly forgotten, *know thou*, what God will shortly make thee

are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened,

4 And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and

thee know, whether thou wilt or no, *that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment*; terrible expectation to those who spend their lives in vanity, and in a moment go down to the grave! Be admonished, *therefore*, before that fatal hour arrives; *remove sorrow from thy heart*, all those causes of it which will be bitterly felt in the days of more advanced age, if the pangs of repentance seize thee; or when in death, if found impenitent, the more terrible pains of hell come about thee; *and put away evil from thy flesh*, the sins of intemperance and uncleanness, to which the flesh is addicted: *for childhood and youth are vanity*; the pleasures of both poor and transient; the days swiftly hurrying by, old age advancing, and death at the door. The sooner we begin seriously to weigh these things, and the more awfully to be impressed thereby, the more diligently shall we set ourselves to prepare for our great change, and be happily ready for our appearance before the judge of quick and dead, whenever he shall summon us away.

#### CHAP. XII.

*Ver. 1. Remember now thy Creator, &c.]* The first point to be examined is, where the description of old age given in this chapter begins. Most interpreters, who begin it with these words in the first verse, *the years draw nigh, &c.* or, at least, with the mention made ver. 2. of the *sun, light, moon, and stars* being darkened, are at great pains to guess what particular infirmities of old age may be represented by each of these phenomena of bad weather. But those pains might have been spared. The image here set before us has too manifest a respect to that which we read but a few verses before, ch. xi. 7, 8. not to acknowledge some analogy between them. *Truly the light is sweet, &c.* It is plain, that *seeing the light*, and *beholding the sun*, are mentioned on no other account, than as proper emblems of a prosperous life. And, indeed, light and darkness are among the most frequent metaphors used by the Hebrews to signify prosperity and adversity. Therefore, when that image offers itself again, in an inference drawn from the premises wherein it had made its first appearance, with this only difference, that an affirmative attends it in one place, and a negative in the other, it is very natural that it should be understood of a painful and calamitous life. Being destitute of light, and living in a climate where the sky does not clear up after the rain, but is so continually overspread with clouds, that there is no seeing either sun, moon, or stars, is as truly unpleasant as seeing the light is sweet. Here may be truly applied a remark of Bishop Lowth, upon a parallel passage in Ezekiel xxxii. 7, 8. *Notæ sunt imagines, frequens earum usus, certa significatio; idèque perspicua, clara, verèque magnifica.\** Thus I would rather look upon this verse as a transition to the mention which is going to be made of old age, than as part of its description. If it has any respect to it, it seems to be but

a very distant one to that time of life, as it is a painful and unpleasant one; and none at all to the particular infirmities to which it is liable. Solomon's design was, to inculcate the necessity of minding our Creator, before a constant course of adversity forces us to think of him. But as one might have objected, that it is not the fate of every man to fall into such misfortunes, it was proper that, after mentioning them in general terms, he should proceed to shew, that, according to the usual course of nature, no long liver can avoid leading, for some time, an unpleasant life as to nature; accordingly, he begins, in the next verse, to describe the state to which a man must at last be reduced, who has *lived many years*. The division of that description into three parts, and the reasons why I look upon the first and last only as poetical, shall be considered in the next note. See Desvoeux, and Bishop Lowth's 6th Prelection.

*Ver. 2, 3. While the sun, or the light.] Before the sun, and the light, and the moon, and the stars be darkened, and the clouds return after the rain. Ver. 3. In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, &c.* Desvoeux; who renders *the grinders, the grinding-maids*, and observes, that whoever reads this description of old age with a tolerable degree of attention must observe, that the beginning of it consists of a double figure; namely, an allegory and a prosopopœia;—whereby the most visible infirmities attending the last stage of life are very elegantly set forth. The whole outward frame of the human body is allegorically represented as a house; and without departing from the allegory, the most remarkably active parts of the body are personified, and appear in the description as so many men or women, to whom the several employments belonging to the house are devised: *The keepers of the house, &c. to the voice of the grinding-maid, is lowered.* But all on a sudden Solomon leaves off that lofty figurative style; not to explain it by saying in plain literal terms what he had already expressed in those daring figures; but to go on with his description, in quite a different strain. There is no more mention of the house; the subject understood by the house comes in without any disguise, and is plainly called *He*:—*He shall rise up, &c.* The infirmities of old age, or rather the alterations produced in our habits and inclinations through the bodily infirmities which generally attend that period of life, are recited in plain literal words, rather than described. If we find two figurative expressions in that part of the account, viz. the *daughters of the song*, and the *grasshopper*, the first was, either by use and custom, or at least by its analogy with other expressions of the same kind, equivalent to a proper one; and the second, which, for aught we know, may also have been in the same case, was chosen for decency's sake, to avoid an obscure word. But it is very remarkable, that, figurative as that expression is, the figure is confined within the word, and does not extend to the sentence; for what is said of the *grasshopper*, that it *shall become a burden, nec quicquam nisi pondus iners*, is an accident belonging to that which is meant by the grasshopper, but in no way to that insect itself; whereas it should belong to both, if the

\* The images are striking, their use frequent, their signification certain, and therefore perspicuous, clear, and truly sublime.

he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low;

5 Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way,

and the almond-tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets:

6 Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the

sentence was allegorical. This part of the description, therefore, may be truly called literal; *And he shall rise at the crowing of the cock, and all the singing-women shall be dismissed, &c.* v. 4, 5. One would imagine that the description, if it be not complete, must proceed in the same way; but the author changes his style again, and abruptly resumes the allegory; yet not the same that he had already employed, but a new one, in order to describe the inward disorders under the weight of which an old man must sink at last, and be brought to his grave. Here there is no more mention of a man; nothing offers itself to a reader who looks no farther than the literal sense, except a well, once richly furnished with whatever was necessary for drawing water out of it, but now becoming useless through the decay of the several parts of the engine.

*Ver. 4. And the doors shall be shut in the streets.] And the double gate shall be shut up towards the inner court, at the lowering of the voice of the grinding-maid: and then he shall rise up at the crowing of the cock, and all the daughters of the song shall be valued at nought.*

*Ver. 5. Also when they shall be afraid, &c.] They shall be afraid even of distant objects, nay, of the scare-crow set on the way-side; the sex shall be neglected, and the grasshopper shall become a burden, and desire shall fail; for the man is going to his everlasting home, and the mourners are walking about the court, ready for his burial.* These alterations of the version are from Mr. Desvœux; who observes, that though interpreters are divided concerning the application of several particulars in this poetical description of old age, they all agree in the meaning of the first allegory, whereby the outward form of our body is represented as a house, and our limbs either as servants to whom several employments are devised, or as parts of the building. Thus, says he, I think every one allows that the arms and hands are the *keepers* or guards, to ward off danger; the knees and legs, which support the weight of the whole fabric, are the *strong men*, and the eyes are the spies or scouts which look out of the window, ver. 3. Then, to complete the picture of the outward appearance of an old man, the falling-in of his lips is represented as the shutting up of a double gate; ver. 4. Thus far I agree with them, and even farther: for I have no doubt but that the teeth are signified by the *grinding-maids*, as I call them, after the LXX and Saint Jerome, or the *grinding-stones*, as some will have it; but I prefer the former, not only because it is most agreeable to the original word, but because the ancients had only hand-mills, at which none but women worked; a custom which, we learn from Dr. Shaw, still prevails among those nations which have retained the ancient manners. The next difference likewise chiefly concerns the image rather than the main sense; for several interpreters, led by the context, observe, that the mouth was represented by what is called the *streets* in the received

version, and in mine *the inner court*. Now the street, being a passage open through and through, does no way resemble a hollow vessel; that resemblance might rather be found in a *market-place*, surrounded with high buildings, with but a few outlets, hardly perceivable in comparison of the surrounding sides. Accordingly the LXX have rendered it *αγορα*; but it is plain that the original word *שוק* *shuk*, means more properly that part of the house which by its form mostly resembled both a *market-place*, and a *basin*. Such was the *inner court*, which Varro calls *cava*, or *cavum adium*, Pliny *cavadium*, and Tully *impluvium*; and we learn from Dr. Shaw, that there was such a court in all the eastern houses. The shutting up of the double gate towards the inner court, is represented as either the occasion of, or being occasioned by, or a circumstance that happens at the same time with, another accident; for the original, *at the lowering of the voice of the grinding-maid*, may equally bear these three constructions; and there is none but may have a proper application to the subject understood by that allegory; for, since it is allowed on all hands that the teeth are meant by the last of these words, because they are the instruments wherewith we grind our victuals, there can be no difficulty in applying the former, either to the broken set of teeth which an old man has remaining in his mouth, or to the gum which must perform the office of teeth, or rather to the tongue which bears a considerable part in the act of mastication, and might on that very account be called the *grinding-maid* by way of eminence. Now the sinking of an old man's lips into his mouth not only happens at the time with, but is owing to, the want of his teeth; whereby the operation of chewing is rendered imperfect. On the other hand, the close compression of the lips may serve partly to drown the disagreeable noise of his chewing with his gums instead of his teeth. As for the literal sense of the image, I think the construction whereby the two facts are connected in point of time is the less subject to difficulties, because it requires no knowledge of ancient usages and customs; for any one sees that the time of *shutting up the gate* must be about the same hour that the necessary work is finished, or when the night is drawing near.

*Ver. 6. Or ever the silver cord be loosed.] Remember thy Creator, I say, before the silver cord be removed, and the golden pulley hasteneth its motion, and the jar be dashed to pieces upon the well, and the conduit be broken, through which the water used to run into the cistern.* See the note on ver. 2, 3. It is on all hands allowed, that the picture-part of the emblem in this verse is a well once richly furnished with whatever is necessary both to draw water and to convey it to the proper places; but now becoming useless through the gradual decay of the several parts of the engine. To understand it right, therefore, it is necessary that we should have some notion of the thing described. It may be reasonably



golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.

7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as

it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

8 ¶ Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; all is vanity.

sonably supposed, that kings and princes had such engines in their gardens as that to which our body is likened, either to supply their baths, or for the conveniency of watering; but the simplicity of those times, and the little progress then made in mechanical arts, may easily have persuaded us that they were of the less composed kind. Solomon tells us, chap. ii. 6. that he had made ponds or reservoirs in his gardens; and the richness of the materials of which the several parts of the engine were made, may afford some reason to conjecture that the description in hand alludes to a machine which he had made to supply them with water. The several things necessary for that purpose, and which we may therefore expect to find mentioned in the description, were, besides the well itself, and a cistern or reservoir placed at a convenient distance, 1. A rope. 2. A pulley, to haul up and let down the rope more commodiously. 3. A bucket, or some other vessel in the nature of a bucket, hanging from the rope. 4. A conduit or gutter to convey the water from the upper edge of the wall which surrounded the well, to the reservoir. These several pieces, when in right order, may very well represent the hydraulic machine called a man; and of course their disorder is a proper image of the distempers whereby the constitution of our body is broken in old age. But, to apply every particular to that special circumstance of human infirmities which Solomon intended it should represent, is not an easy task; as it depends upon the notions which that prince had of the inward structure of our body, and of the office of each part: no one can be qualified to explain it who has not a competent skill in ancient anatomy; I say ancient, for it is not to be presumed that Solomon could or would allude to discoveries whereby he must have *then* been unintelligible; and Hippocrates himself, the father of physic, is but a modern with respect to our author. Therefore I content myself with explaining the letter of the allegory, and leave the accurate deciphering of it to professed anatomists; upon whose opinion, however, I would not advise the reader to place too great a dependence; as their decision, in this case, cannot be much better than conjecture. See Desvœux, who has very largely and learnedly justified the above version, as the reader will find in the 376th and following pages of his essay. However, for the satisfaction of such as would wish to see some attempt to decipher this allegory, we shall subjoin at the end of this chapter such an attempt by an able writer; at the same time referring such as wish to see more on this subject, to the famous portrait of old age by Dr. Smith.

Ver. 7. *Then shall the dust return to the earth.*] Desvœux connects this with the preceding verse; at the end of which he places a semicolon only, and reads thus, *And the dust return into the earth as it was, and the spirit return unto God who gave it.* From the 7th verse of the preceding chapter we have the *third precept*, which, on account of its importance, is more enlarged upon than the

two former, and has some retrospect to the *three propositions* considered jointly, but a more special one to the *third*. It might be thus shortly expressed: "Since men (being ignorant or unmindful of what must come to pass after their death) cannot find their way to happiness in this world, they must look for it after death, and lead in this world a life suitable to that expectation." First then, Solomon puts us in mind that, however pleasant we may imagine a man's life to be when attended with uninterrupted prosperity, yet a single reflection upon his future state is sufficient to damp his joy, and to convince him that all the happiness he has enjoyed is but vain, on that very account, that *it is past*, chap. xi. 7. 8. Then, from that observation he infers, that we must always keep futurity in view, and remember Him at whose disposal we know that all future events are, ver. 9, 10. This we must do during the whole course of our life, even from our youth, and in our most flourishing state, because the whole of our conduct must be once canvassed and examined before the supreme judge. Here the author, who in this book seldom misses the opportunity of a description, not satisfied with the bare mention of old age, describes the infirmities of it in a very elegant manner. But, as the style of that description is mostly figurative, it is not perhaps very easy to point out with certainty the particular infirmities attending a decrepit state, which are therein mentioned: yet the general meaning is very plain, which is sufficient to answer the main purpose. However, the description seems to consist of three parts. The first allegorically points out, under the image of an ill-attended house, the most obvious infirmities of old age; that is to say, those which can scarcely escape the notice of any one who beholds an old man; ver. 3. and part of the 4th. The second part of the description sets forth, chiefly in plain literal terms, those alterations for the worse, which too often age produces in a man's habit and inclinations; part of ver. 4 and 5. The last part, under the emblem of a well which becomes useless through the decay of the engines, and other things necessary to draw water out of it, and to convey it to the proper places, represents the inward decay of the constitution, whereby we are at last brought to a state wherein (chap. ix. 10.) *there is no work nor device to be done, nor any use for knowledge and wisdom*, ver. 6. But, lest any one should suspect that Solomon involved the whole man in the ruin and destruction of the bodily machine, he does shortly assert a distinction of principles, and a difference of fate between body and soul. The one was made of earth, and returns into it. The other came from God, and returns to him. Ver. 7.

Ver. 8. *Vanity of vanities.*] The least reflection upon that ultimate term of all our occupations, enjoyments, and schemes of happiness in this world, *death*, naturally brings into one's mind the maxim set forth in the beginning of this discourse, and from which, by proving its truth with respect to all those, the Hebrew philosopher had endeavoured

9 And moreover, because the Preacher was wife, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs.

10 The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and *that which was written was upright, even words of truth.*

11 The words of the wife *are* as goads, and

as nails fastened *by* the masters of assemblies, *which* are given from one shepherd.

12 And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books *there is* no end; and much study *is* a weariness of the flesh.

13 ¶ Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his com-

voured to evince the necessity of a future state. Wherefore it was proper to mention it again, in order to prepare the minds of his hearers for the general conclusion; which, however, he divided from it by the *fourth* and last precept or advice that he thought necessary to give; and which, as it had no particular retrospect to any argument used before, it was proper to divide, somehow or other, from those that had. See on the following verses.

*Ver. 9—12. And moreover, because the Preacher was wise.] And moreover the orator, as he was wise, still taught the people knowledge, and made himself to be listened to; nay, he sought out many important sentences, and set them in proper order; ver. 10. The orator, I say, spared no trouble to find out pleasant words, and one who could well write down this true discourse, ver. 11. One shepherd gave the words of the wise like goads, and appointed the masters of collections, like planted repositories: Ver. 12. And farther, my son, be instructed by them. There is no end of making many books, and it is a great trouble to examine much.* Desvœux; who observes, that the 11th verse might be translated, *The words of the wise are like goads, and the masters of collections are like planted garden-houses: they were given by one shepherd;* which, as to the turn of the phrase, agrees with the version of Geneva; and he is of opinion, that the *masters of collections* were officers appointed to examine into the merit of the collections which were published, and to declare which contained the genuine sayings of the wise, and which not. It is said of these masters, that they were *given* or *appointed* by the monarch or *sole-shepherd*; which shews that they were public officers; and it is possible that they were the same as the rulers or princes of the synagogue; but as it is at the least doubtful whether there were any such things as synagogues in Solomon's time, it is more proper not to assign any other employment to these officers than that of taking care of the collections of wise sayings, and being a kind of guardians of their authenticity. That this was, or at least made part of, their business, is plain from the advice, *And farther, my son, be instructed by them, &c.* and as to the propriety of the expression, they might be called *masters of the collection* which they had in charge, as the *magister supplicium libellorum* in Latin, and the *master of the rolls* in English. How long that employment lasted among the Jews, is more than we can tell; but it is probable, that the *men of Hezekiah, king of Judah*, (Prov. xxv. 1.) to whose care we are indebted for several chapters of the book of Proverbs belonged to the college or board instituted by Solomon; of which number I suppose his secretary to have been, whom I understand to be specified by the words, *One who could well write down this true discourse.*

The author's design was, to recommend a work which may be viewed in two different lights; as a discourse spoken, and a book written. Its first public appearance was in the first shape; but it is probable that it was taken in writing, and perhaps from the orator's own mouth, by his secretary. This made it proper to mention the abilities of that officer, that those who had not heard Solomon speaking might depend on the exactness of the copy, and if he had been chosen from among the *masters of collections*, which we suppose, the honourable mention made of him naturally brought in that of the board of which he was a member. The *fourth* and last precept (see ver. 9.) contained in these verses, consists in a high commendation of the present discourse, whether heard, as it was when Solomon spoke it, or read, as it was intended it should be when published according to his directions. The commendation is taken, *First*, From his personal abilities and reputation. *Secondly*, From the pains that he had taken to make this work perfect, with respect both to the matter and style. *Thirdly*, From the reasonableness of depending on the care and capacity of those whom he himself had appointed either to take his words down in writing as he spoke them, or to preserve his collections. To this effect, having represented the words of the wise as instruments of agriculture, perhaps because they serve to cultivate the mind, he does, pursuant to the same figure, represent those officers as the places where such instruments are kept, and where any one that wants them must resort to get them. Thus, by applying to the proper officers, any one may save himself the trouble of going through the endless collections of others, which, to pursue the simile a little farther, we may compare to a large garden, where you might look a great while for the gardener's tools, without finding them, if there was not a known repository.

*Ver. 13, 14. Let us hear the conclusion, &c.] Let us hear the conclusion of the whole discourse. Fear God, and keep his commandments, for that is the business of every man; ver. 14. Because God shall bring all the works of men into judgment, with respect to every thing which was not taken notice of, whether good or evil.* Now the sacred orator comes at last to the CONCLUSION which he had aimed at from the very beginning, viz. that every part of our conduct, whether it be praise or blame-worthy, shall be examined by the Almighty, who shall reward and punish even that which in the present dispensation of providence he seems to overlook. Whence it follows, that it is the interest of every man to fear God, and to obey his laws, that so he may be found guiltless when brought into judgment. See Desvœux, and Peters on Job, p. 414.

With

mandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it* man. *be* good, or whether *it be* evil.

14 For God shall bring every work into

With respect to this *conclusion*, it must be observed, that, the book being of a much older date than our artificial logic and dialectic, we have no reason to expect that Solomon should have strictly kept to the rules which they prescribe, and especially as his performance was a kind of mixed work, wherein philosophy was to appear in the dress of oratory. To say nothing, when you come to the conclusion of an argument, but what properly belongs to that conclusion, or has been before mentioned in the premises, and may be directly inferred from them, is a method accommodated to the rules observed by logicians, and certainly conducive to perspicuity; but it is more popular, and better suits the genius of rhetorical eloquence, to join the corollary or consequence drawn from the conclusion with the conclusion itself, so as to make but one compound proposition of both. If this be but remembered, one may easily see that we have put the right construction upon the conclusion of this book, though at first we may appear to have thrown part of it aside. Let the whole exhortation contained in the two last verses be compared with the book itself, whereof it is declared to exhibit the conclusion and design; and it will undoubtedly appear, that the meaning of it can be no other than this; namely, "The sole or principal motive to observe the laws of God is the steady belief of a future state; wherein God himself will judge mankind, and render unto every one according to his works:" and who can doubt but in that proposition the greatest stress is laid on the doctrine of a future state, as the only point which, in the nature of things, could have stood in need of proofs? The advisableness of obeying God's commands is so obvious, when once he is allowed to have both rewards and punishments in store for mankind, that it could never have required twelve chapters to make it out. Besides, is there not reason to suppose that the author of the book understood the nature and design of his own work better than any interpreter born in after-ages? But what motive could ever have induced him to mention the doctrine of a future state, and judgment to come, as that which he had from the beginning laboured to establish, as the *conclusion of the whole discourse*, had his thoughts all along been employed on those subjects which several interpreters suppose he had chiefly in view? And let nobody object that the end properly, or at least primarily, declared by Solomon to have been in his view, is the fear of God, and not the doctrine of a future state; for these are two points which he considers as if they were but one. Besides, a very good reason may be assigned why he spoke of the fear of God, though the certainty of a future judgment was what he had principally aimed at; viz. that that doctrine is a powerful incentive to fear God; whereas no plausible one can be given, why he should have said a single word of that certainty, had the fear of God been the subject of which he directly intended to treat. See the introductory note on this book, and Bishop Lowth's 24th Prelection.

#### THE PICTURE OF OLD AGE,

*From chap. xii. ver. 1—7. according to the common Translation.*

The royal preacher, in the first seven verses of this chapter, enforces the duty of early religion, by arguments principally drawn from the decay of the intellectual and corporeal powers in an advanced age. The evils induced upon the mental system are little more than cursorily spoken of. The inconveniences resulting to the bodily structure from a long series of years, are more particularly expatiated upon. Whence it is evident, that Solomon chiefly designed the reader's conviction to arise from an anatomical survey of the human fabric. But the description here exhibited of the various organs of the body is somewhat obscured by an allegorical phraseology. In order to explain the meaning of the words, and the connection of the author's sentiments, let us view them in the form of a didactic essay.

Ver. 1. In the earliest part of thy life meditate frequently upon thy great Creator. Remember likewise, that thou art not indebted to him only for thy existence, but for thy continued preservation, and for the repeated comforts vouchsafed unto thee daily. Be sure, therefore, to testify thy gratitude for such high obligations, by consecrating the bloom of thy youth to Almighty God. This is assuredly the period of thy most acceptable services. Do not postpone the discharge of religious duties to more advanced years, because infirmities, pains, and sorrows will then imbitter thy days, and render life an insupportable burthen.

Ver. 2. Consider farther, that not only the body is enervated by age, but that the intellectual faculties, those luminaries of the microcosm, are likewise impaired. The understanding is darkened, the memory debilitated; and too often the will becomes cold, languid, and enfeebled; or perverse, restive, and reluctant to the exercises of religion.

Let me also add, that besides these natural obstacles arising from deficient powers of body and mind, there are very many contingent impediments to our duty: I mean those outward troubles and afflictions, which accompany human life, and which are usually multiplied, in proportion to the number of years which a man sojourns upon earth. Hence it is, that towards the close of our days we find disappointments and sorrows arise in a quick succession, like returning clouds in a wet season.

Ver. 3. But as the early surrender of our hearts to God, and the steady application of our minds to his service, are matters of such vast consequence, it may not be amiss to examine with greater precision those particular lets and hindrances to our duty which are generally the effects of age. Now, these impediments will appear evident from a scrutiny into those evils which advanced years bring upon the human system.

Those *hands*, which should frequently be lifted up in prayer to God, being weakened by age, hang down and tremble

tremble. They are disabled from earning provision for the body, and defending it against external injuries. At the same time, the ribs and the stronger bones of the thighs and legs, which formerly gave strength, rectitude, and stability to the whole fabric; which likewise, in conjunction with the back-bones, connected and held together the several parts of the edifice: these strong and mighty supports, I say, are all relaxed, or bowed down by age, and foretel the approaching fall of the superstructure.

The *teeth* also, in advanced life, become incapable of discharging their office, by a decay of their substance, or loss of their number. Hence the aliment is not properly broken, and divided and prepared for the stomach. From which cause a multitude of ills arise to the system in general; because the food, being imperfectly acted upon by the teeth, is likewise imperfectly acted upon afterwards by the stomach. Whence proceed indigestion, obstructions, and a default of nourishment, through the various parts and members of the body.

The defect of *vision* is another concomitant evil of old age. The eyes, those valuable organs! so essentially necessary not only to the comforts of life, but also to the security and preservation of man, are incapacitated from performing their important functions. Those *windows* of the building are darkened by films or defluxions; and the soul is, at it were, precluded from looking out at these obstructed casements. Whence it follows, that as from the decay of our strength we are disqualified for the active duties of religion; so likewise, from the diminution of our sight, we can make no fresh acquisitions to our knowledge by reading, or thereby recal or quicken past ideas and notices of our duty.

Ver. 4. But to return once more to those instruments which first prepare and dispose the food for its advantageous reception in the stomach: because, since our very being depends on the sustenance that we receive, and its due distribution through all the parts of the body, we can easily infer, that the entire loss or destruction of our teeth must cause a great failure of strength and vigour to the whole system.

That old age deprives us of these smaller bones, is too obvious a truth to be insisted upon. But, besides the unhappy consequences already enumerated, an additional difficulty presents itself to our view. The gums at this period are to perforate the province of the teeth. Nevertheless, the smoothness of their surfaces render them very unfit for this work. Hence what pains and labour are aged men obliged to take, before they can bruise and soften their food sufficiently for the purposes of the stomach. It is also observable, that the lips, those portals of the mouth, are kept constantly shut during the action of the jaws, lest the morsel, through the loss of teeth to withhold it, should be protruded, and fall out of the mouth.

Another melancholy effect of old age, is a *deficiency of sleep*, whereby the strength and spirits are farther impaired. The old man frequently awakes at the crowing of the cock, and is incapable of renewing his slumbers: whereas the youth, and man of middle age, can perpetuate their sleep almost at will.

Notice has already been taken of defective vision: but the organs of *hearing* are likewise great sufferers by age. Those *daughters of music*, who by their exquisite delicacy of sensation and skill in melodious principles, formerly

reduced sounds into harmony, for the entertainment of themselves and others, are now brought into the lowest estate, and are no longer in a capacity of answering the ordinary purposes of their structure.

Ver. 5. But, however material and weighty all these evils may be, there is still a heavier and longer train of calamities, which associate themselves with advanced years.

Whereas youth is bold, valiant, and regardless of danger, age is quite the reverse of this character. The ancient man discovers, in every action, diffidence, irresolution, and timidity. In all his short excursions abroad, he treads with circumspection, wariness, and distrust. After painfully ascending an eminence, he is seized with a temporary giddiness; and in his descent, he trembles at every pebble in the path, lest his strength should prove disproportionable to such little obstacles, and a fall ensue.

Thus fears and terrors are attendant upon the steps of that man whose grey hairs resemble the whitening blossoms of the almond-tree, and to whom, from the decline of his strength, even the grasshopper, that light and inconsiderable insect, becomes a burthen. Add to all these particulars, a disrelish of every scene around them, from the failure of desire, and the decay of other passions. Yet all these inconveniences and ills are inseparable from humanity, because man is born to die, and age is the harbinger of death. To enforce this truth by arguments, would be an insult offered to the understanding of men, while funerals and mourning relatives are frequently darkening all the streets.

From what has been already said upon the weakness, infirmities, and distempers of advanced life, the expediency, as well as the duty of early religion, must appear abundantly plain. However, as the human body is a complicated structure, and as little more than the external parts of the building have at present been considered, let us carry our researches farther, and examine what is doing in the more private and retired chambers of this wonderful fabric.

Ver. 6. Here we shall be astonished at the stupendous displays of Almighty wisdom, power, and goodness. Know then, that there are scattered up and down in the human body a multitude of white cords, to which anatomists have given the appellation of *nerves*. These strings are the instruments of sensation and motion. For if a nerve be tied hard, or cut asunder, that part to which the nerve belonged, instantly loses all feeling, and becomes destitute of action.

From the brain, which is the source of the whole nervous system, there proceeds through the entire length of the back-bone (in a cavity curiously formed for its reception and security) a cord of an enlarged size, which, on account of its resplendent whiteness, may aptly be compared to the complexion of burnished silver. From this cord are branched out thirty pair of smaller strings, which are distributed along the arms, thighs, legs, and trunk of the body. Now in old age this *silver cord* is very liable to be relaxed and weakened, or a part thereof to be altogether broken in its functions, as appears manifest from those *paralytic* complaints, to which elderly persons are peculiarly obnoxious. When a relaxation of this cord prevails, then tumours and debility are the consequences. When the canals which compose this cord, are quite obstructed, then follow complete *palsies*; or, in other words, an entire deprivation of sense and motion. Ought we not, therefore,

to remember our Creator in the prior stages of life, before this melancholy period of deficient sensation and action arrives? For a palsy is partial death, and many times portends the speedy dissolution of the whole building.

But, agreeably to what has already been suggested, the brain is the original of the nerves. Those nerves, which are bestowed upon the eyes, the ears, the tongue, and all the other parts of the face and head, issue immediately from the brain itself, through small apertures in the skull, primarily designed for the transmission of these little cords. Any disorder happening to these nerves, and interrupting their functions, will occasion, according to the degree of the disease, dimness of sight, or total loss of vision, heaviness of hearing, or absolute deafness, defective speech, or an utter incapacity of speaking; will deprive the lips in part, or altogether, of their due motions, and likewise impair or annihilate the smell and the taste.

What an amazing organ is the brain! that source and parent of all sensation and motion! That inexplicable repository of the understanding of man! How curious its texture! How tender its substance! and of what vast importance to the present existence, utility, and comfort of the species! For which reason the all-wise Creator has securely lodged it in a strong citadel of bone; which, from its circular cavity, and the inestimable value of its treasure, may with propriety be styled the *golden bowl*.

But it is observable, that in the extremity of old age, this golden bowl, and more especially the contents thereof, are highly injured. The several parts of the brain, through length of time, become unfit for their various offices. It is like an exquisitely wrought machine, with complicated movements. A long succession of years breaks, wears out, and dissolves this surprising workmanship. Wherefore it must be the most egregious folly to defer the consideration of our eternal interest till the winter of life comes upon us, when we are disqualified for the common intercourses of society, and even for the ordinary actions of animal life.

But additional motives for early religion will result from a scrutiny into the effects of age upon the heart, and the great vessels which proceed from this fountain of life. We most assuredly ought to secure the favour of our Maker before these large canals, which issue from the heart, and receive, like *pitchers* at a well, the contents of this spring, be grown incapable of discharging their office aright. For it is an incontestable truth, that in elderly men, these grand conduits, which take the blood from the heart, in order to circulate it through the lungs, the brain, and all the organs and members of the body, become bony, rigid, and inflexible: whereby they are disabled from acting upon the blood, and driving it through all the distant pipes of the system. Hence those languors, faintings, and sudden changes, which frequently occur in persons much advanced in years.

But also the heart itself, that *cistern* of the whole building, which receives and dispenses to the farthest extremities, in an appropriated period of time, every particle of blood belonging to the body; I say, this powerful reservoir is rendered by old age unfit for its important charge. Part of its substance, like the great canals already mentioned, degenerates into bony fibres, which are unable to perform their due action. For the heart propels the blood to the extreme parts by a *contractile* force. If this

contractile power is abated by the hardness and inflexibility of the heart's substance, it is apparent that the circulation of the blood cannot properly be carried on; but momentary stagnations, sinkings of spirits, and universal weakness must follow. Because this power of contraction, like the *wheel* of a water-engine, is the grand and principal cause of the distribution of the fluids through all the numerous channels of the system.

This is a true, though uncomfortable, representation of the animal œconomy in the decline of life. Whoever, therefore, attentively surveys this picture, ought to act answerably to the admonitions which it suggests. He should acquaint himself with God from his youth, and secure the friendship of that Almighty Being, who *will not forsake him in his old age, and when he is grey-headed*.

Every serious and thinking man must be convinced, that the dedication of the prime of his days, and the vigour of his strength to heaven, is both wisdom and piety. To all procrastinating votaries, will not the prophet's interrogatories be very apposite? "If we offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if we offer the lame and the sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto the governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of Hosts."

Ver. 7. But it must also be noticed, that these defects and decays of the system are the immediate forerunners of its dissolution: that, when this *great change* befalls us, the materials of which our bodies are composed shall be all resolved into earth, from whence they were taken; and our souls, which animated these organized particles of dust, shall return to God, the Father and Judge of our spirits; who will reward or punish us, according to our deeds in the flesh. This is an argument of infinite weight, and indeed far superior to any arguments hitherto urged for the remembering of our Creator in the days of our youth. Wherefore, let the rising generation consider, that if through grace they nobly scorn the blandishments of sense, and inviolably attach themselves to their duty, they will be most gloriously recompensed at the grand tribunal, ver. 14. "when God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

REFLECTIONS.—1st, This chapter is a continuation of the subject which closed the preceding. We have,

1. The application of the Preacher's discourse to young men, by way of admonition and counsel. *Remember now, without delay, thy creator, or creators, the triune God, whose right to us is unquestionable; not only our Maker as men, but our Redeemer also as sinners, and thus twice our creator; and therefore justly expecting that we should glorify him in our bodies and in our spirits, which are his.*

2. He urges his exhortation by the suitableness of the season, and the prospect of the evil days which are approaching, when the infirmities of age and sickness so much disorder the mind as the body; when we should have gotten, and not be then to seek, the supports of religion, which these days of evil and anguish need; and when, if at last we should reflect on our past days, it must give us the most painful reflections, to look back on the flower of our years spent in the service of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and only the dregs of age remaining for God.

3. The

3. The calamities of old age are elegantly and feelingly described: probably the sacred penman now spoke from experience. *The sun, the light, the moon, the stars are darkened, the eyes of the body grow dim, and can no longer enjoy the surrounding objects of light, and the faculties of the mind are impaired; the judgment awakened, the memory lost, the imagination frozen: and the clouds return after rain, successive troubles and ails follow each other, and under painful defluxions the body melts away. The keepers of the house tremble, the paralytic head, the shaking hand, and tottering knees bespeak the feeble frame, and the strong men bow themselves; the legs can scarcely support their weight, and on some artificial prop the body bending to the tomb is sustained: the grinders cease, because they are few, the toothless gums no longer perform their office to masticate the food: and these that look out of the windows are darkened, the eyes sunk in their sockets, and no more sensible of the light of day. And the doors shall be shut in the streets; they eat little, close their lips to keep their food in their mouths, having lost their teeth; and are unable to appear as formerly in the streets; and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, his broken rest is easily disturbed with the crowing of the cock, or the least noise, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low; the voice becomes inharmoonious and harsh, the ears dull of hearing. Also they shall be afraid of that which is high, unable to ascend the hill, or climb the tower; their breath fails, their head turns round, and fears shall be in the way; they are afraid of falling through weakness, and ready to stumble at every thing in their path: and the almond-tree shall flourish; with silver hairs their heads are covered\*, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, either their chirping is irksome, or, if used for food, however light of digestion, too heavy for their stomach; and desire fails, the appetite lost, and the passions of youthful days utterly quenched. And in this debilitated and exhausted state, death cannot be far distant; because man goeth to his long home, the grave, where the abode of his body must be till a resurrection-day; or, to the house of this world, that eternal world which should alone be regarded by us as our proper home: we should consider ourselves as pilgrims upon earth, and strangers while here below, and look for, and hasten to, the everlasting habitations which await us above; and the mourners go about the streets, either those who were hired to weep for the dead, or those dear relatives, who with no fictitious tears bedew the bier of their departed friend, and fill the air with their lamentations. The silver cord, the bond of union between body and soul, will then be loosed; the golden bowl, which contained the animal spirits, be broken; then shall the pitcher be broken at the fountain, and the wheel broken at the cistern, the heart cease to beat, the blood to flow, and universal stagnation and death ensue. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, such is the dire effect of one man's sin, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it, to receive its doom; either admitted to the blissful presence of God, or reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Well might the Preacher conclude from this humbling view of mortal man, with the position that he had advanced as the text of his discourse, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.**

2dly, The Preacher is drawing to a conclusion, and

warmly recommends what he has written, as the dictates of wisdom and experience. He tells us,

1. The pains that he took for our instruction. *Moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; what God had given him, he freely communicated; and, being recovered from his falls, returned to his former happy employment of making others wise unto salvation: yea, he gave good heed, extracting all the instruction he could find among books or men, and well digesting and pondering it in his own mind, and sought out with elaborate and accurate investigation the more difficult parts of science, and set in order many proverbs. 1 Kings, iv. 32. The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words, such as might most effectually, powerfully, and pleasingly convey the sacred truths which he laboured to inculcate; and that which was written was upright; being the dictates of God's Spirit, even words of truth, proceeding from the God of truth.*

2. The use and intention of his discourse. *The words of the wise are as goads, sharp and quickening, convincing the conscience of sin, and stimulating our stupid hearts to diligence and activity in working out our own salvation: and as nails, to fix the wavering soul on God, fastened by the masters of assemblies, the ministers of the true religion, whose office and business it is, with ceaseless labour, to inculcate these words of truth, which are given from the one shepherd, who alone can make their ministry effectual to the conversion of men's souls; and he has promised to be with us always, even unto the end of the world. In dependance upon him, therefore, must we go forth, and confidently expect to be assisted by him, and made successful in the preaching of his gospel.*

3. The Bible is the book of books; compared with this, all others are insignificant; and whatever corresponds not herewith is carefully to be avoided. *And further, by these my son, be admonished, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest these sacred truths; or of what is more than these beware, and affect not to be wise above what is written, but reject every writing which pretends to add to, or diminish from, what is revealed in the word of God: of making many books there is no end; it is vain to expect conviction from any other book, if the book of God do not produce it; and though our study were crowded with writings of philosophy and morality, one page of God's word speaks with more power, authority, and evidence to the conscience, than these numberless volumes; and much study is a weariness of the flesh; the composing or reading human works with fixed attention wearies both the mind and body; but the study of the book of God is as pleasing as it is profitable.*

3dly. Behold, reduced to a single point, the sum of true religion, the certain means of happiness, and the great end of man: *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; fear God, and keep his commandments; the one the principle, the other the practice which necessarily flows from it. The fear of God comprehends all serious godliness, a reverence of his majesty, a deference to his authority, and a dread of his displeasure, and this will engage us to keep his commandments diligently, constantly, universally; making conscience of all our ways, and seeking to have them more exactly conformed to that perfect rule which he has prescribed. Two things are urged to enforce this.*

1. The consideration how much it is our bounden duty thus

\* See note on this passage.

thus to fear and serve God. *This is the whole duty of man*, it is the great end of his creation, and should be his first concern; or, *this is the whole man*, he is then truly blessed and happy; which all the world and all the things therein can never make him.

2. The consideration of the judgment approaching. *For God shall bring every work into judgment*: of what infinite moment then must it be to us, how we shall appear at his bar, where, according to our deeds, our eternity must be determined for endless joys or everlasting burnings! God sees and marks all our ways, *with every secret*

*thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil*; before the assembled world of men and angels they will be produced, and judgment, according to the truth, be executed. Happy they who keep this great day ever in their view, and feel the impression of it deep upon their hearts, restraining them from evil, quickening them in their course, supporting them under trials, and engaging them to persevere, faithful unto death; they shall have great boldness in the day of judgment, be counted worthy to stand before the Son of Man, and be admitted into the everlasting joy of their Lord.

T H E  
S O N G O F S O L O M O N .

*SOLOMON, in this Song of Songs, celebrates the chaste marriage of Jesus Christ with his church, and also with every faithful soul in particular. This is the sublime idea, to which the mind and the heart must be elevated in reading this book. Whoever inspects it with profane eyes, and a heart enslaved by carnal love, will find in it a literal sense which kills, instead of a spiritual which regenerates. It was on this account, that the Jews ordained that it should not be read by any one under thirty years of age. Not that they did not hold this book to be inspired and dictated by the Holy Ghost: for they acknowledge that it is not only Holy, but, as they term it, The Holy of Holies. They did not prohibit it to the weak and the profane, but because it was above the comprehension of the former, and too sacred for the latter. And in the early ages of christianity, the leading men of the church, as far as possible, interdicted the reading of it to carnal souls, and to such as were incapable of comprehending the spiritual and mystical ideas with which it is replete.*

*With respect to the canonical authenticity of the Song of Songs, it is equally acknowledged both by the Jews, and by the Christian church. We know of no person among the primitive christians, except Theodore Mopsuestes, who has had the boldness to contest it. To all objections then, we oppose the authority of all the Christian churches, the authority of the Jews, that of all ages, of all the fathers, and of all the commentators, who have unanimously received this work as canonical and inspired. If the name of God be not to be found in it, it is because, this composition being one continued allegory, in which, under the title of a Bridegroom, is to be understood God, or Jesus Christ, it was the intention of the author, and in some measure the very essence of his work, that the thing signified should remain concealed under the allegorical veil. It is the duty of those who explain it, to draw aside this veil, and to expose to view the real personage. The scriptures are full of such metaphorical figures. How often, for instance, are the synagogue and the church represented under the similitudes of a vineyard and of a bride. Has it ever been required that God should be expressly named, who is the husband of this wife, and the master of this vineyard? The Song of Songs is one continued allegory of the marriage of Jesus Christ with the church. The Hebrews were accustomed to these figures, and, in Holy writ, they are to be found having all the appearance of real history. The fathers of the christian church, in all ages, considered the Canticles as the Epithalamium of the mystical marriage of Jesus Christ with his church. Those who complain that they find nothing but allegories in this book, complain without reason; for what they call an allegorical and mystical sense, is the proper sense of this book. If it be interpreted in a carnal sense, it is totally misunderstood. We do not mean to canonise all the conceits and imaginations of commentators and mystics: if low, trivial, puerile, and impertinent conceptions are to be found in their works, these are not in the least to be imputed to the work itself, which is sacred and divine. Moreover, the idea of the Canticles, as representing the marriage of Jesus Christ with his church, is noble and sublime, and founded on the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and on the consent and unanimous usage of the synagogue and of the church in all ages. This general view of the union of Jesus Christ with his church does not,*  
*however,*



however, exclude another of a more private nature; the union of every true believer with this divine husband. I divide the Canticles into seven days, according to the plan of the celebrated Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux.

I. Day. The Bride, who represents the church, testifies a great desire to be united to Jesus Christ, in order to be instructed by him. It is in him that she places all her delight; she perceives herself overpowered by the favours that he has conferred upon her; she acknowledges herself unworthy of them; makes an humble confession of her imperfections; and asks him where she may find him, that she may place her whole confidence in him alone (chap. i. ver. 1—7).

The Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, instructs the church by telling her that she must thoroughly know herself, in order to be well acquainted with her Husband: and this is an instruction which belongs also to every soul that wishes to be united to its God. She must hearken to her Bridegroom, who tells her, that by attaching herself to him, she will acquire all the beauty which is necessary to please him. Then the perfume of her spikenard, which denotes her prayers and praises, shall be as an agreeable odour which will give pleasure to the Bridegroom, to whom the bride has just united and attached herself. He recognizes the beauty that he has himself given to the church; and the bride is full of admiration, in contemplating the excellent qualities which render her husband infinitely amiable (ver. 7, and following). Again, the Bridegroom, or Jesus Christ, makes known the purity of his bride, by comparing it with the most delicate flower of the fields—to the most agreeable lily of the vallies; and afterwards he explains the nature of his bride's chastity, by comparing it to the blossom of a lily flourishing among thorns, that is to say, amidst the disorders and vices of a corrupt age (chap. ii. ver. 1 and 2).

The bride converses with the daughters of Jerusalem, that is to say, with true believers: she praises the beauties of her Bridegroom; she imparts to them the favours that she has received from him; she informs them of the transports of divine and sacred love; she perceives how much she stands in need of the assistance of Jesus Christ, that he may support her under pains and persecutions with his left hand, and that from his right hand she may receive favours and consolations.

She then appears among the daughters of Jerusalem, to forbid them to disturb the repose of her Bridegroom. The pious soul dreads nothing so much as to offend her Lord, or grieve his Holy Spirit.

II. Day. The Bride hears and knows the voice of her Bridegroom: so the chaste and faithful soul feels the attractions of the grace of Christ, and rejoices that she has been able to thaw the ice of hardened hearts. The Bridegroom wishes to hear the voice of the church, who renders him thanks for so many wonderful instances of his love: and that the enemies of the graces and of the advantages enjoyed by the church may not come and snatch these blessings from her, the Husband, Jesus Christ, orders his ministers and the pastors of his church to seize the foxes which destroy the vines. The bride then declares that she is intirely devoted to her Husband, who has given himself to her by his Incarnation and by his Spirit of Union.\*

The Bride, afterwards conversing with the daughters of Jerusalem, makes known to them the very great uneasiness that she suffers when she has any cause to fear that she has lost her divine Bridegroom. She gets up, and takes every necessary step to find him; she applies to the officers to whom the duty of guarding the city is intrusted, that is to say, to the pastors of the church; but she must exalt herself above them: she does not find her well-beloved till she has gone beyond them; and after she has found him she exerts her utmost efforts not to lose him any more. It is in him alone that she finds repose; and the Bridegroom will not suffer any one to disturb her in this state of tranquillity (chap. iii. ver. 1—5).

\* As the beautiful allegory contained in this divine song affords so large a scope for the exercise of the imagination, I have not scrupled to give in my preface, criticisms, and reflections, the sentiments of the most eminent commentators, attending through the whole with the utmost care to the analogy of faith.

III. Day. *The daughters of Jerusalem being assembled, and admiring the glorious state to which the church, the bride of Jesus Christ, was exalted, they exclaim. Who is this that springs up from the wilderness of nations formerly deserted? She resembles the smoke that ascends on high, and the vapour which exhales from the various sorts of incense, by the exercise of all the graces, which are signified by the different kinds of perfumes. These pure souls, the companions of the church, afterwards shew her the bed on which the Bridegroom repeses; he is surrounded by three-score valiant men, who represent the saints that fight for Jesus Christ, and more particularly the ministers of the Gospel: they have swords in their right hands, and carry others in their belts, to shew that they are indefatigable in the combat, and in the use of the word of God: and the truly pacific King, encompassed by these valiant warriors, is carried in a litter, or carriage, the pillars of which are of silver, emblems of the eloquence of the true evangelical preachers: the back is of gold, which signifies the universal love with which the pastors of the church ought to be animated: the seat is purple dyed with the blood of the martyrs, and all the inside is decorated with every thing that is most precious, and best suited to adorn the souls which are devoted to God; and the whole is done in behalf of the daughters of Jerusalem, who say to each other—Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon wearing the crown with which his mother crowned him; come, and behold Jesus Christ, that God made man, who is crowned with the human nature, which he took upon him on the day of his marvellous nuptials and ineffable alliance with us (ver. 6. and following).*

*The Bridegroom, now conversing with the bride, cannot help admiring her beauty, which consists in her being adorned with all the graces and virtues, more particularly with humility and modesty, with the mildness of lambs, and the purity exemplified by the whiteness of a flock of sheep that have just been washed: this beauty of the church is likewise described by such lively comparisons as are best adapted to convey a just idea of the divine love which animates this spiritual bride, and which ought to dwell constantly in the hearts and upon the lips of the preachers of the Gospel. This chaste spouse, for instance, is compared to the tower of David, from which are suspended a thousand bucklers, that is to say, witnesses of the truth of the Scriptures—the holy ministers of the Gospel, who repel the shafts of the enemies of the church, by drawing their artillery from the inspired writings, these fertile sources from whence are derived all things necessary for life and salvation. From them, when accompanied by the Spirit of grace, springs up that quickening light which serves to conduct us to the dawn of that great day, when the shadows which surround us in this world shall be for ever withdrawn.*

IV. Day. *The divine Husband must go up to the mountain of myrrh, where he must drink the sacred cup of his passion, and offer up the incense of his holy intercession for the reconciliation of mankind. It is on this hill that he will invite the bride to come in search of him: on her arrival upon mount Libanus, or the mountain of incense, which denotes his intercession, she will be crowned, after having passed over the mountains of Amana, of Shenir, and of Hermon;—that is to say, after having conquered all the difficulties which are to be encountered in preaching the Gospel in those different nations, where the people, before this, resembled lions and leopards by the ferocity of their manners. Their conversion will considerably improve the beauty of the bride, and will be a token of her fecundity; and the agreeable odour of her garments shall be diffused through all the parts of the earth. Like an inclosed garden she will be full of all sorts of fruits; of all heavenly tempers, and of all good works; and the rivers of grace will pour forth in it those waters of health, which will continue to flow on in every faithful soul to life eternal. The zephyrs, breathing the soft winds of the Holy Spirit, shall constantly fan this mystic garden, to render it still more fertile and odoriferous. (chap. iv. ver. 1. and following).*

*The well-beloved Bridegroom, allured by the beauty of his garden, comes to it to gather myrrh, the symbol of mortification, and to enjoy the odoriferous perfume of grace and good works; and he invites his friends the pastors of the church to partake, in unity and submission, of the pleasures which his garden affords (chap. v. v. 1).*

V. Day.

**V. Day.** *The bride, during the absence of her well-beloved, seems to take a little repose; but the earnest desire that she has to find her Bridegroom, who does not let her perceive his arrival, keeps her heart in constant attention; she is always on the watch. Her well-beloved Jesus Christ knocks, and asks her to open to him the door of her heart. The bride now is sensible of his approach; and, at length, after some delay, she opens her heart to the attractions of grace, that she may receive her well-beloved: but he conceals himself, and she cannot find him, and it seems as if he would not answer her.*

*The church, in seeking Jesus Christ, and through attachment to him, suffers persecutions, and so, likewise, does every true believer, who loves this divine Husband. If the faithful be asked, who is this husband to whom they are so inviolably attached, they answer that he is altogether lovely—admirable for his beauty, his infinite perfections, his purity, his zeal, and his love; they extol in lofty strains his infinite knowledge, his wisdom, his power, his greatness, his strength, and his mildness; and the daughters of Jerusalem, charmed with so amiable a portrait, offer to accompany the bride, to find Jesus Christ (v. 7. and following).*

*The bride, after searching for her Husband, at last discovers that he is gone down into the delightful garden; she gives herself up entirely to him, and will not possess anything besides him. The Husband also entirely devotes himself to his wife. Jesus Christ admires the different beauties which he himself has planted in the church; he looks upon her as the most beloved; and she, on her part, employs herself in the exercise of all the graces and all the virtues, that she may have the happiness still more and more to please her divine Husband. The enemy of mankind sometimes disturbs her in this holy exercise; but the faithful ministers of the gospel encourage and comfort her (chap. vi. v. 1. and following).*

**VI. Day.** *The bridegroom Jesus Christ, addressing his friends the pastors of his church, apprizes them, that imperfections will be found in it, and that, by comparing the church to a camp in which there are all sorts of soldiers, they will discover in the church imperfect believers, some of whom will perhaps be an occasion of scandal; but this will not prevent the church herself from being acknowledged to be the daughter of the prince, nor her beauty from continuing to be the object of her husband's delight and admiration. It will be at the gates of the palace of this chaste bride that a great concourse of people will assemble, and use their utmost endeavours to enter into it; all nations shall come thither in crowds. The Husband makes use of different comparisons to extol the beauty of the church, and thus addresses her—"O how fair and full of graces art thou, who art my dearly beloved, the delight of my heart." He, at the same time, foretels the victories that she will gain over all her enemies, by saying that her stature is like unto a palm-tree (chap. vii. ver. 1—9).*

*The bride, well knowing the love that her well-beloved has for her, gives herself up wholly to him; and, desirous to follow him wherever he goes, she invites him to go and dwell in the villages, that so the knowledge of the name of Jesus Christ may be spread abroad in every place. The church represents to him the sweetness of the fruits of the country, and the charms of frequent solitude; she herself abounds in all sorts of fruits (ver. 10. and following).*

*The bride continues to shew a great ardency to be united to her well-beloved: the church desires nothing more earnestly than to unite herself to Jesus Christ; she offers him wine mixed with perfumes, that is to say, the blood of the martyrs with the good odour of evangelical preaching spread abroad by the faithful ministers of the gospel. Jesus Christ watches incessantly for the tranquillity and peace of the church; the daughters of Jerusalem admire the privileges and comforts that she enjoys, leaning on her well-beloved, who has recovered her from the state of corruption into which she had fallen. He requires from her in return for so great a benefit, an ardent love for him, a love strong as death, and which nothing could overcome, nothing could extinguish—a love of preference by choice (chap. viii. ver. 1. and following).*

**VII. Day.** *The church acknowledges that her fruitfulness proceeds from Jesus Christ, who is the true Solomon, the King of Peace, who has planted a vineyard in which he finds a great multitude*

of obedient subjects : he has given it to his pastors to take care of, and it is their duty to improve the talent confided to them. There are many of his servants who love, and who seek the fruit of this vineyard : but there are only two hundred (a determinate number for an indeterminate) chosen to keep and preserve its fruits in the quality of pastors. They are all attentive to bear the voice of their Bridegroom, and faithful in the execution of his commands. The spouse then invites him to return to his Father. Fly, my well-beloved, go to the mountains of spices and perfumes, enter into possession of the glory which is due to thee as the Son of God, and which thou hast still further merited by thy sufferings on earth as the Saviour of Mankind.

## CHAP. I.

In this chapter, after the title of the book, ver. 1. we have Christ and his church, Christ and a believer, expressing their esteem for each other. (1.) The bride, the church, speaks to the bridegroom, ver. 2, 3, 4. to the daughters of Jerusalem, ver. 5, 6. and then to the Bridegroom, ver. 7. (2.) Christ the Bridegroom speaks in answer to the complaints and request of his spouse, ver. 8—11. (3.) The church expresseth the great value she has for Christ, and the delight she takes in communion with him ver. 12—14. (4.) Christ commends the church's beauty, ver. 15. (5.) The church returns the commendation, ver. 16, 17. Where there is a fire of true love to Christ in the heart, this will be of use to blow it up into a flame.

[Before Christ 1014.]

**T**HE song of songs, which is Solomon's.

## CHAP. I.

Ver. 1. *The song of songs, which is Solomon's*] This is a Hebraism, which signifies the most excellent song: the latter part of the title ought perhaps to have been rendered, which is concerning Solomon. The first day's eclogue commences at this chapter, and is continued to ch. ii. ver. 7.

Ver. 2. *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth*] The Hebrew idiom delights in redundancies of this kind; so in Pf. xvii. 10. *With their mouth they speak*: Pf. lxvii. 17. *I cried with my mouth*: and in ch. viii. 7. of this song, *would be utterly contemned* is in the original, *contemning they would contemn*.

Ver. 3. *Because of the favour, &c.*] The eastern nations, and indeed the ancients in general, dealt much in unguents, which in the hot countries are necessary to brace and close up the pores of the body: fragrant ointments were especially used on nuptial and other festival occasions. See Pf. xlv. 8.; Prov. vii. 17.; Amos, vi. 6.; 2 Sam. xii. 20. Hence the odour of sweet ointments became a common metaphor, to express the extensive acceptableness of a good name. Eccles. vii. 1. Houbigant connects this sentence with the preceding words thus, *For thy love is more excellent than wine, and thy fragrance than fine ointments*. New Translation.

Ver. 4. *Draw me, &c.*] The author of the New Translation renders this verse thus; SPOUSE: O draw me after

2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.

3 Because of the favour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.

4 Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee.

5 ¶ I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.

6 Look not upon me, because I am black,

thee: VIRGINS: *We will run to the fragrance of thy perfumes*. SPOUSE: *The king hath brought me into his apartments*. VIRGINS: *We will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will celebrate thy love more than wine*. Thou art every way lovely. The LXX, Vulgate, and Ethiopic, add the words, *to the fragrance of thy perfumes*. The Chaldee countenances this addition. Perhaps the speech of the chorus might more properly have been rendered, *We will follow the fragrance of thy perfumes*. The translation given of the last clause of this verse, which is from Sanctius, seems well to answer the context, "All the loves are with thee; or, Thou art altogether lovely." Houbigant renders the whole to this effect: *We will celebrate thy loves; we love thee more than generous wine, or wine that goes down smoothly*. See his note, Le Clerc, and the New Translation.

Ver. 5. *I am black, but comely*] The word שְׁחֹרָה *schechorah*, rendered *black*, signifies brown, swarthy, or dark-complexioned, and denotes such a duskiness as that of the morning, when some little light begins to appear. The appellation of *fair*, which is given to the bride in the sequel, is only meant in the general sense of *lovely* or *beautiful*. The tents of the wild Arabs, called in Scripture אֹהֶל קֵדָר *ahalei keidar*, are to this day of a dark or black colour, being made of the shaggy hair of their black goats.

Ver. 6. *Look not upon me, &c.*] *Look not down upon me, because I am brown; for the sun hath discoloured me. My mother's children were severe unto me: they made me keeper of the*

because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.

7 ¶ Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?

8 ¶ If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.

9 ¶ I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.

10 Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold.

11 ¶ We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver.

12 ¶ While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.

13 A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.

14 My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi.

15 Behold thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes.

16 Behold, thou art fair, my beloved,

*the vineyards: mine own vineyard have I not kept.* There is a peculiar emphasis in the original of the last clause; *mine own vineyard, which is mine, have I not kept.* Houbigant translates the word שְׁבִילִי (*shibli*)—*quietly*; but this translation is not admissible, if, with Bishop Patrick and others, we allow *vineyard* to be the eastern phraseology for an office committed to a person, or any interest he is concerned in.

*Ver. 7. Where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon*] In the hot countries, the shepherds and their flocks are always forced to retire to shelter during the burning heats of noon. *One that turneth aside* is rendered by Houbigant and the New Translation, *a wanderer*. This verse contains a fine apostrophe, and strongly marks the affection of the bride. See Virgil's *Culex*, ver. 116.

*Ver. 8. If thou know not, &c.*] This is the reply of the virgins, and it breathes all the simplicity of pastoral life.

*Ver. 9. I have compared thee—to a company of horses*] This, says the author of the New Translation, is the speech of the bridegroom, who, meeting the bride and her virgin companions, says, *I have compared thee, O my love, to my well-trained steed in Pharaoh's chariots.* We ought not to think the comparison coarse or vulgar, if we consider what beautiful and delicate creatures the eastern horses are, and how highly they are valued; and, withal, the very strong figurative expressions which the oriental writers are continually using. Theocritus, as is observed by Grotius and others, has made use of the very same image to express the beauty of Helen; *Idyll. xviii. ver. 29.* Though here, indeed, the bridegroom does not seem to have in view to compliment the bride on her beauty, so much as to celebrate her conjugal fidelity. She is anxiously concerned for his absence, and fondly goes in search of him. Upon seeing her thus employed, he is charmed with her affection for him, and, as the words may be paraphrased, commends her for drawing well in the marriage yoke. The *chariots of Pharaoh* are mentioned, probably, because Egypt was at that time most celebrated for its horses and chariots; and the phrase may signify in general a chariot of the most elegant and excellent sort.

*Ver. 12. While the king sitteth at his table*] *While the king shall be in his tent, or pavilion*, Houbigant. The New Translation has it, *While the king sitteth in the circle of his friends*; namely, at the nuptial banquet. The tables of the ancients were so framed that the guests formed a circle.

*Ver. 13. A bundle of myrrh*] The orientals were accustomed to tie up myrrh in bundles, and to put them into the bosom to exhilarate the spirits. Some interpret the words צִרוּר הַמֵּר צִרוּר הַמֵּר *iferror hammor, a wreath, or nosegay of flowery myrrh.* See Bishop Patrick and Castalio.

*Ver. 14. As a cluster of camphire*] *As a cluster of cypress flowers*; the New Translation. By *cypress* here, is not meant the trees so called, but an aromatic plant which, Sir Thomas Brown tells us, produces a sweet and odoriferous bush of flowers; out of which was made the *oleum cyprinum*. See his "Observations on Plants mentioned in Scripture." The *vineyards at En-gedi*, near Jericho, were not so much for vines as aromatic shrubs. These the Jews cultivated for the sake of their gums, balsams, &c. in which they carried on a considerable commerce. Such shrubs were managed after the manner of vines. Hence the nurseries of them were called *vineyards*: see Bochart. *Hieroz. tom. ii. p. 724.* Hasselquist is of opinion, that Solomon here refers to a *cluster of the Cyprus grape*. See his *Travels*, p. 448.

*Ver. 15. Thou hast doves' eyes*] To conceive the force of this expression, we must not refer it to our common pigeons, but to the large and beautiful eyes of the doves of Syria. They who have seen that fine eastern bird, the *carrier-pigeon*, will need no commentary on this place. See Brown's Observations.

*Ver. 16. Yea, pleasant: also, &c.*] The author of the New Translation puts a full stop at *beloved*; and renders the next clause thus; *and how pleasant, how green, is our flowery bed!* remarking, that the generality of versions seem not to have attended to the beautiful force of the original, where the particle אֵן *ap* is repeated. Literally, the whole passage, according to the proposed amendment, would be, *Behold, thou art fair, my beloved. Yea, pleasant, yea, green, or flowery, is our bed.* Or, it may be rendered, *Behold, thou art fair, my beloved; yea, pleasant. Yea, our bed, or couch, is strewn*

yea, pleasant: also our bed is green.      and our rafters of fir.  
 17 The beams of our house are cedar,

*strewn with flowers*; for the word rendered *green*, is translated *flowery* by the best critics.

Ver. 17. *And our rafters of fir*] *And our carved-works of cypresses*. Hiller. Our ciplings of cypress. Houbigant, and New Translation. *ברותים berotim*, are a peculiar kind of trees, which might be called after the original, *brutine trees*. They resemble the cypress in form, and the cedar in smell. See Ainsworth.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. The title of the book, *The song of songs*, one of the most excellent of all that ever were composed, both respecting the matter of which it treats, the love of Christ and his church; and the manner of its execution, which is most elegant and beautiful.

2. The penman, *which is Solomon*, inspired by the Holy Ghost, or concerning *Solomon*, the divine Redeemer, of whom he was a type, the Prince of peace, the God of love, who makes his people happy in communion with himself; and in the sense of his favour gives them a joy and happiness, which the world knoweth not of.

2dly, Filled with a transport of delight and love in contemplating the glorious object of her affections, the church,

1. With abrupt address, as enraptured with the sight of her beloved, breaks forth, *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth*, as a token of reconciliation, which the sinner above all things desires; who, trembling under the sense of guilt, cries for pardon, and begs that God would seal it to his soul, and make him rejoice in the comfort of it, by giving some sweet manifestation of himself, and shedding abroad his love in the heart: *for thy love is better than wine*, more pleasing to the soul than the most delicious wine to the palate, and more reviving and exhilarating than the richest cordial, as they who have tasted it find by delightful experience. *Because of the savour of thy good ointments*, the unction from the Holy One, the fulness of divine grace resident in Jesus, and from him communicated to his people, *thy name is as ointment poured forth*, diffusing the most delightful fragrance, and making glad the heart of the miserable, who beholds in *Jesus* a saviour of sinners, and, in *Immanuel*, God with us, an all-sufficient Saviour; *therefore do the virgins love thee*, engaged by his excellence, and longing for nearer and more intimate communion of spirit with him; and *virgins*, in the purity of their affections, the fidelity of their attachment, and their beauty and comeliness adorned with the graces of his Spirit.

2. She prays to experience fresh constrainings of divine love. *Draw me* with the cords of love, for we are weak and impotent, unable to follow Jesus one step farther, unless his everlasting arms be under us, and his grace strengthen us; and then *we will run after thee*, with warm affection and eager desire; and, from experience of the sweetness of the way, shall be inviting others to come with us, and taste how good the Lord is.

3. She acknowledges the favourable answer given to her requests. They are no sooner offered than granted.

The king, the anointed Redeemer, the eternal Prince and Saviour, the glorious Bridegroom, *hath brought me into his chambers*, graciously condescending to take the sinful soul into nearest union with himself, and putting it in possession of all the riches of divine grace stored up for the use of his bride: well therefore may such a one say, *we will be glad and rejoice in thee*; of ourselves we have nothing to rejoice in, much to be ashamed of, much to lament; but in Jesus we have the most abundant cause for joy unspeakable and full of glory, both in his person, offices, and relation to us; and, on account of what he has done, is doing, and is willing further to do for us and in us. *We will remember thy love, more than wine*; his love was more grateful than the most exquisite wines, which at feasts are so eagerly sought; and the remembrance of it, not like the impressions made on our senses, which quickly die away, but deeply engraven on the soul, and the delightful sense of it continually abiding: O that this were more our own blessed experience! *The upright love thee*; this is the character of the Bridegroom's friends; their souls are renewed by grace, God's word is their rule, love is their principle, holiness their path, and glory their end; when they who now love the Lord Jesus Christ sincerely and perseveringly, shall then love him in the highest perfection, shall, in the fullest sense, dwell in love, shall dwell in God, and God in them.

4. She addresses herself to the daughters of Jerusalem: *I am black as the sooty tents of Kedar*: black with persecutions, reproaches, afflictions, sufferings; *because the sun hath looked upon me*, as those who are exposed to its scorching beams have their skins discoloured: *my mother's children were angry with me*; for, usually, from false brethren and carnal professors the severest trials of the faithful come; *they made me keeper of the vineyards*, seduced by temptation, and drawn to compliance with their false ways and worship: *but mine own vineyard have I not kept*; with shame, like a true penitent, whom we must imitate, she acknowledges her past neglects and departures from God. Yet, notwithstanding, she can now say, *Look not upon me, because I am black*, with an eye of contempt or disdain; for, amidst all my infirmities and suffering, I am *comely as the curtains of Solomon*, comely in the eyes of God, sprinkled with the blood, and adorned with the graces of the divine Redeemer, shining in patience amid the darkness of affliction, and coming from the furnace of persecution bright as silver purified seven times in the fire.

3dly, We find the Lord for a while departed, and the church, through her unfaithfulness, left to lament his absence, and anew to seek his face.

1. She earnestly inquires after him, and pleads hard for his returning favour. *Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth*; *tell me where thou feedest* the flock of thy pasture, *where thou makest it to rest at noon*, that my soul may be with thee, enjoy thy presence, join in thine ordinances, sit under thy shadow, and again be refreshed with the sense of thy love: *for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?* who pretend to be such, but are really hypocritical

CHAP. II.

In this chapter, (1.) *Christ speaks both concerning himself, and concerning his church, ver. 1, 2.* (2.) *The church speaks, [1.] Remembering the pleasure and satisfaction she had in communion with Christ, ver. 3, 4. [2.] Entertaining herself with the present tokens of his favour, and taking care that nothing happens to intercept them, ver. 5—7. [3.] Triumphant in his approaches towards her, ver. 8, 9. [4.] Repeating the gracious calls he had given her to go along with him, invited by the pleasures of the returning spring, ver.*

10—13. *out of her obscurity, ver. 14 and the charge he had given to the servants to destroy that which would be hurtful to his vineyard, ver. 15. [5.] Rejoicing in her interest in him, ver. 16. [6.] Longing for his arrival, ver. 17. They whose hearts are filled with love to Christ and hope of heaven, know best what these things mean.*

[Before Christ 1014.]

I AM the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.

critical and heretical, teaching doctrines of lies and delusion: and to be suffered to be seduced by them, nay, to be only suspected of leaning towards such false teachers, could not be thought of by a sincere soul without grief and anguish.

2. The gracious Redeemer quickly answers her inquiry, and points her to the paths of peace: none err finally, who sincerely and perseveringly look to him for direction. *If thou know not, or seeing thou knowest not, the way, bewildered through ignorance, O thou fairest among women; such an endearing title does he give her; and though the church, and every real member, blush and are confounded at their backslidings, yet these will Jesus guide and lead aright; go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, be found in the ordinances of divine worship, and mark the good old way in which holy men have walked, and the faithful continue to follow, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents; attend the ministry of those who labour in the word and doctrine, and lay themselves out in the service of immortal souls: nor should they who have the charge of others come alone, their children, relations, servants should be encouraged to draw near the shepherds' tents, the courts of the sanctuary.*

3. Christ expresses his high regard to his church: *I have compared thee, O my love, (so tender an appellation does he give to those who of themselves are so unworthy of his regard,) to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots; the most beautiful of their kind, and drawing with mutual and united efforts. Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold; beautiful with the graces, gifts, and consolations of the Spirit, more precious than the richest jewels, and shining brighter than burnished gold: and greater glories still in store for her and every faithful soul; he who has decked her in these bright ornaments will add thereunto. We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver, that she may be complete and perfect, lacking nothing, especially in the great day of consummation, when she shall be presented in all the beauty of holiness before the throne of God: and this is the work of the sacred Three.*

4thly, We have the communion maintained between Christ and his church.

1. She expresses her loyalty and affection towards him, her husband and Lord. *While the king sitteth at his table: he is a king, reigning from eternity, and in a peculiar manner has established his throne in the hearts of his people, who submit to his government, and are safe and happy under his protection: he is infinitely condescending, sitting at his table, inviting the poor and miserable sinner to come and partake of all his rich provision of gospel-grace,*

and giving the kindest reception to those who in faith and love draw near at his bidding; and when he manifests his presence in the midst of his people, then *my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof; the graces of his saints are in lively exercise, their faith strong, their love ardent, their zeal flaming; and this is to him a favour of a sweet smell, more pleasing than the most fragrant spices. A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; beloved, well-beloved, best-beloved; compared with Christ, a gracious soul may be said to hate every thing besides: he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts, constantly embraced with the warmest affections of her heart, and yielding a joy to the faithful soul, preferable to the sweetest perfume placed in the bosom, till the night of time shall give place to the rising morning of eternal day. My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire, or cypress, in the vineyards of En-gedi. The sense is evident,—that Christ is inestimably precious; all fullness of excellence resides in him; his atonement, intercession, and grace, are more delightful to the heart than the sweetest camphire or cypress to the smell, or the most delicious cluster of grapes to the taste.*

2. Christ testifies his complacency in her, well-pleased with the profession of her warm attachment to him. *Behold, thou art fair, my love: the words speak Christ's gracious regard and tender affection towards his people: thou hast doves' eyes; the piercing eyes of faith, the modest eye of simplicity, and dove-like innocence. Note; (1.) However contemptible in the eyes of others, or loathed in his own, a believer may be, he is precious in the eyes of his Lord. (2.) We must remember, that, however our adorable Lord is pleased to account of us, or whatever good we possess, it is all of grace; we have nothing that we have not received.*

3. The church echoes back the words of her spouse with mutual professions of like endearment. *Behold, thou art fair, my beloved; the faithful scarcely know how to admit this character to themselves, but to their gracious Lord with greatest propriety it belongs; he is fair, indeed, in uncreated beauty; he is the sun without a spot; she but the moon, who borrows all her light and beauty from him; yea, pleasant, shining on his faithful people with cherishing rays; no frowns cloud his brow, but the endearing smiles of tenderness make glad their hearts continually; and all his promises are Yea and Amen, speaking peace and joy to their souls: *also our bed is green; between husband and wife there is a community of goods; when we are Christ's, all his things are ours: the bed is the church of the redeemed, where the faithful assemble to meet their Lord in the ordinances of his service; and green, to denote the pleasantness of the courts of the Lord's**

3 N

house,

2 As the lily among thorns, so *is* my love among the daughters.

3 As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so *is* my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit *was* sweet to my taste.

4 He brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me *was* love.

5 Stay me with flagons, comfort me with

apples: for I *am* sick of love.

6 His left hand *is* under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.

7 I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake *my* love, till he please.

8 ¶ The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.

house, or the numerous converts that are collected therein, or the flourishing state of their souls. *The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir, or galleries;* which may refer to the ministers of the gospel, who, instrumentally under Christ, support the glorious fabric; or to the faithful in general, whose stability, and gratefulness to him, are hereby shadowed forth.

## CHAP. II.

*Ver. 1. I am the rose of Sharon] I am a rose of the field.* We have here followed all the ancient versions, in preference to those of the moderns, who generally interpret שרון *Sharon* as a proper name; yet a little attention to the context will convince us, that the bride does not here mean to extol the charms of her person, but rather the contrary. The Bridegroom had just before called her *fair*; she, with a becoming modesty, represents her beauty as nothing extraordinary, as a mere common wild-flower. But this the Bridegroom denies, insisting upon it that she as much surpasses the generality, as the flower of the lily does that of the bramble; and she again in return speaks with admiration of the Bridegroom. The words may have a still further force, and imply a tacit comparison. *The rose of Sharon* expresses eminence; whereas she calls herself *a rose of the field*, in opposition to the rose of the garden, which has more beauty, and is distinguished for its richness and variety of colouring; whereas the rose of the field, and the lily of the valley, owe their distinction to the less ornamented flowers which grow around them. See the New Translation and Houbigant.

*Ver. 3. As the apple-tree, &c.] As the citron-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the youths;* New Translation; in this rendering following the Chaldee paraphrase, which observes, with what superior beauty that rich fruitful plant must appear among the barren trees of the wood. The word תפוחים *tappuchim*, rendered *apples*, in the 5th verse, should also be rendered *citrons*. The author of the *Observations* remarks, that citron-trees are very noble, being large, their leaves very beautiful, of an exquisite smell, and affording a most delightful shade: the fragrance of the fruit is admirable.

*Ver. 4. He brought me to the banqueting-house] O bring me into the banqueting-house: spread the banner of love over me.* I rather choose, with the LXX, to translate the word in the imperative mood, because by this means the passage is rendered much more spirited, and corresponds more exactly with the following verse.

*Ver. 5. Stay me with flagons] Instead of stay, we might render the word support; and as flagons would be a very*

improper support on this occasion, and likewise seem to carry with them a very low idea, we should, agreeably to the meaning of the word, as derived from the Arabic, read *verdant herbs*. The whole passage might be rendered; *Support me with verdant herbs, refresh me with citrons, for I am wounded with love.* See Michaelis's notes, p. 157. Parkhurst says, that the original word signifies *some confectionary prepared by fire*. See 2 Sam. vi. 19. Hosea, iii. 1. Isaiah, xvi. 8.

*Ver. 7. I charge you, &c.]* This is a rural form of adjuring: the bride intreats her virgin companions by those creatures in which they may be supposed to have taken frequent pleasure; but we must never forget that Christ, the heavenly bridegroom, is the supreme, yea, in a true sense, the sole object of her love. The word rendered *love* is emphatical, and signifies *my amiable one*. See Haffelquist, p. 192. and the New Translation.

Though I so largely enter, both in my preface, and in my reflections at the end of every chapter, into the spiritual meaning of this divine song—the only meaning for which it was dictated by the Holy Spirit, and recorded in the canon of Scripture—yet I cannot refrain from adding also a few spiritual remarks at the close of every eclogue. By the spouse is meant the CHURCH, who, possessed with the most passionate love of the promised Redeemer, expresses in ch. i. ver. 2. her fervent desire for his appearance in the flesh; declaring at the same time the excellence of his name and grace, and confessing her own unworthiness, as having been too long seduced by false teachers, and lost in gentile idolatry, ver. 5, 6. Under the sense of this, she earnestly desires to know and learn the way of true religion, ver. 7. a desire pleasing to the Bridegroom, who exhorts her to enter into the holy assemblies of pious souls, and to bring her young converts to be instructed by such pastors as the great Shepherd will appoint in his church, ver. 8. where she may receive spiritual strength and beauty, ver. 9, 10. where all her members, by their union in religion, may add splendor and glory to her, ver. 11. where her graces may diffuse their odours, and her heart rejoice in reciprocal affection, and all the acts and offices of fervent piety, ver. 12—17. and chap. ii. 1—7.; for the mutual expressions of esteem in these verses seem evidently calculated to set forth the superlative pleasures and heartfelt delights of communion between Christ and the sincere Christian; particularly as experienced in all the acts and offices of religion.

*Ver. 8.* The second day's eclogue begins here, belongs wholly to the spouse, and is addressed by her in a continued narration to the chorus of virgins.

*Ver.*



9 My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice.

10 ¶ My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.

11 For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;

12 The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and

the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;

13 The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines *with* the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

14 ¶ O my dove, *that art* in the clefts of the rock, in the secret *places* of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet *is* thy voice, and thy countenance *is* comely.

15 Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that

*Ver. 9. My beloved is like a roe, &c.]* This should be connected more properly with the preceding verse. *My beloved resembles a roe, &c. leaping and skipping upon the hills.* The following part of this verse would be better rendered thus: *Behold, he stood behind our wall; he looked in through the windows; he shewed himself through the lattice.*

*Ver. 11. The winter is past]* One part of the winter is distinguished from the rest of it by the people of the East, in the latitude in which Solomon lived, on account of the severity of the cold. At Aleppo it lasts about forty days, and is called by the natives *maurbanie*. I would propose it to the consideration of the learned, whether the word *חַיִּים* *setarv*, here used and translated *winter*, may not be understood to mean what the Aleppines express by the term *maurbanie*. It occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament; and another word is used for the rainy part of the year in general. If this thought be admitted, it will greatly illustrate, in a critical sense, the words of the bridegroom, *Lo! the winter is past; the rain is over, is gone:* for then the last clause will not be explanatory of the first, and signify that the moist part of the year was entirely past; with which Dr. Russell assures us all pleasantness withdraws at Aleppo;—but the words will import, “The *maurbanie* is past and over; the weather become agreeably warm; the rain too has just ceased, and consequently has left us the prospect of several days of serenity and undisturbed pleasantness.” The weather of Judæa was, in this respect, I presume, like that at Algiers; where, after two or three days of rain, there is usually, according to Dr. Shaw, a week, a fortnight, or more, of fair and good weather. Of such a sort of cessation of rain alone, the bridegroom, methinks, is here to be understood, in the literal sense, and not of the absolute termination of the rainy season, and the summer-drought’s being come on; and if so, what can the time that was *past* mean, but the *maurbanie*? Indeed Dr. Russell, in giving us an account of the excursions of the English merchants at Aleppo, has undesignedly furnished us with a good comment on this and the two following verses. “These gentlemen (it seems) dined abroad under a tent, in spring and autumn, on Saturdays, and often on Wednesdays: they do the same during the good weather in winter; but they live at the gardens in April and part of May. In the heat of the summer they dine at the gardens, instead of under the tent; that is to say, I suppose once or twice a week they dine at the gardens, as once or twice a week they

“dine under a tent in autumn and spring.” The cold weather is not supposed, according to the letter of the text, to have been long over, since it is distinctly mentioned; and the Aleppines make these excursions very early: the *narcissus* flowers during the whole of the *maurbanie*, and *hyacinths* and *violets* flower also at least before it is quite over. The appearing of flowers then does not mean the appearing of the first and earliest flowers, but must rather be understood of the earth’s being covered with them; which at Aleppo is not till after the middle of February, a *small crane’s-bill* appearing on the banks of the river there about the middle of February, quickly after which comes a profusion of flowers. The nightingales too, which are there in abundance, not only afford much pleasure by their songs in the gardens, but are also kept tame in the houses, and let out at a small rate, to divert such as choose it in the city: so that no entertainments are made in the spring without a concert of these birds. No wonder then that Solomon makes the bridegroom speak of the singing of birds; and it teaches us what these birds are, which are expressly distinguished from turtle-doves, and are here used by the Holy Spirit of God to represent much more noble concerts. It would be disparaging the reader’s taste to point out to him the beauty and elegance of this whole address.

*Ver. 13. The fig-tree putteth forth, &c.]* The fig-tree giveth sweetness to her green figs. The fig-trees in Judæa bear double crops, the first of which is ripe in spring. *פַּגְעִיבָה* *paggeiba*, signifies the unripe fig. The word *חָנַת* *chanat*, which we render *putteth forth*, properly signifies to preserve with aromatics. By a metaphor it is applied to fruits, and implies to maturate or sweeten. Several of the versions, both ancient and modern, read *the vines in blossom*, instead of *the vines with the tender grape*; but our version is very justifiable.

*Ver. 14. O my dove, &c.]* O my dove, through the clefts of the rocks, through the secret places of the stairs let me see thee, &c. New Translation.

*Ver. 15. Take us the foxes—that spoil the vines]* More literally, *spoil the vineyards;—for our vineyards, &c.* Foxes abound in Judæa, and are observed by a multitude of authors to love grapes, and to make great havoc in vineyards. Galen in his book *Of Aliments*, tells us, that the hunters in his country did not scruple to eat the flesh of foxes in autumn, when they were grown fat with feeding on grapes. While the vines were just putting forth the *tender grape*, it would

spoil the vines: for our vines *have* tender grapes. he feedeth among the lilies.  
 16 ¶ My beloved *is* mine, and I *am* his: 17 Until the day break, and the shadows

be easy for the foxes to do most mischief, by gnawing the young buds. See the New Translation and Patrick.

*Ver. 17. Until the day break, &c.] Until the day breathe, or, till the day blow fresh,* for this is the literal meaning of the original. This is a local beauty; for in those hot countries the dawn of the day is attended with a fine refreshing breeze, which is exceedingly grateful. See Vatablus, and the New Translation. As in this verse, so in that preceding, the bride considers the bridegroom under the metaphor of a roe or young hart. Dr. Delaney is of opinion, that the rock which parted David from Saul was one of those mountains which Solomon here calls *הרי בֵּתֵר* *harei bather, the mountains of Bether,* interpreted in the margin of our English Bibles *the mountains of division*: others have thought that *Bather* was a strong town in the country of *Bithron*, not far from *Trachonitis*; probably the same which *Adrian* besieged in the 17th year of his reign, and is named *Badr* by *Abu-Giafar* in his history of the *Saracens*. See *Capellus* and *Le Clerc*.

#### REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. The heavenly bridegroom describing his own excellence, and the beauty of his bride: *I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys*; all perfections center in him; his person adorned with that fulness of the spirit, which God without measure gave unto him; his humanity white as the lily, without spot of sin; blushing as the rose, when on the bloody tree he made the atonement; in the purity of his life, and in the sacrifice of his death, diffusing a fragrance well-pleasing, yea, most acceptable to God; and from which we derive all the sweetness of the great and precious promises which grow in the garden of God. *As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters*; she resembles him, therefore is beloved by him; he sees in her his own image, and delights therein. *Among the thorns of evil men, and a world lying in wickedness, does this lily grow, and as infinitely preferable to them as that sweet flower in look and smell exceeds the briars of the field.*

2. The spouse returns the commendations on her Beloved, and professes her joy in him, her dependance upon him, her solicitude to please him.

(1.) She prefers him before all others. *As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons*; none of the sons of men on earth, none of the sons of the mighty in heaven, are to be compared with the Lord; when he stands forth in his transcendent beauty, they hide their diminished heads.

(2.) She declares the delight that she had in his presence and company. *I sat down under his shadow with great delight*; Christ is the shadow of a great rock in a weary land; the sinful soul, scorched with the fire of wrath, flies thither, and finds a happy resting-place: under his shadow are pardon, peace, and joy, protection from danger, and possession of every desire of the soul. Blessed and happy are they who there take up their abode. *And his fruit was sweet to my taste*: they who by faith feed on Christ, will find the promises of his word, the gifts of his grace, and

the manifestations of his love most delightful, *sweeter than honey and the honey-comb*. He brought me to the banqueting-house; led me thither by the hand of his grace, where the richest provision of every blessing that a miserable sinner can need, was provided; and his banner over me was love; love boundless and infinite contrived and executed the plan of man's salvation: love reared the banner of the Gospel, inviting lost souls to Jesus, the captain of their salvation; love sweetly, powerfully, engages them to list under his colours; love constrains, emboldens, enables them to fight under his standard, and be more than conquerors. Lord, over me display this banner of thy love!

(3.) She professes the fervency of her love. *Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples*; for I am sick of love; overcome with the sense of the amazing grace of God in Jesus Christ; and, like the spirit of Jacob, fainting with joy at the glad tidings; or sick with the vehement desires, which nothing but a sense of Christ's presence and love could satisfy; and therefore desiring a manifestation of his favour, to revive the drooping soul, as wine restores the fainting spirits.

(4.) She acknowledges the ready answer vouchsafed to her request. *His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me*; though for a while dejected, and destitute of spiritual delight, the praying soul shall certainly experience divine supports.

(5.) She expresses her solicitude to preserve her communion with the Lord. *I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, all the members of the church of Christ, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, by every thing that is dear and desirable, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please, by any quarrels and unchristian disputes among yourselves, or by your sins provoking him to depart*. We should be watchful against every thing that would cause him to arise and leave us. The way to keep our peace and comfort abiding is, to be careful and jealous over our own hearts.

2dly, It should seem as if, notwithstanding the charge given, the Lord had been disturbed, and had withdrawn; but now returning in mercy the church with rapture hears his voice, and welcomes his approach.

1. She triumphs in her Beloved. *The voice of my beloved!* how pleasing, how delightful, the well-known voice; the sound of which makes the heart leap for joy: *behold, with wonder, his amazing grace, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills*: thus the Old Testament church beheld him descending from the everlasting hills to be incarnate; thus the church of Christ, and every true believer, now behold him hastening to their relief, when mountains of inbred sin seem to separate them from him; and thus all his devout followers are looking for him, when the second time he shall bow the heavens and come down, his voice awake the dead, and his saints be finally triumphant in glory. *My beloved is like a roe, or a young hart*; so amiable in himself, so swift to fly to the relief of his believing people: *behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice*.

flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe, or a young hart upon the moun-

tain of Bether. lattice; so they beheld him before his incarnation, behind the wall of ceremonies, at the windows of his promises, and through the lattice of sacrifices, types, and figures: and we still see him through the glass of faith, but darkly when compared with what we hope for: the veil of flesh is between us; we get now and then a glimpse of him at the windows of his grace and promises, and through the lattice of his ordinances maintain some near communion with him; but we expect to see him shortly face to face, and to know no more those separations which the body of flesh now occasions. Hasten, Lord, that happy day.

2. She relates the gracious invitation which her beloved had given her. *My beloved spake and said unto me, with infinite condescension and tenderness, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away;* appellations expressive of the endearing affection of Jesus, whose love indeed passeth knowledge; and the call, *Rise up*, intimates the slumbering frame into which she had fallen, and the need that she had to be awakened. The argument which he uses to prevail with her, is the beauty of the returning spring, when, winter's lowering clouds blown over, the vernal sun decks in its gayest livery the earth with flowers, and every grove resounds with feathered songsters; the turtle cooes, the fig-tree buds, the grape shoots forth her tendrils, and all around breathes fragrance. This description may be applied,

(1.) To the state of the sinner's soul, when Christ in the word of his gospel comes to awaken him from the sleep of spiritual death: frozen, dark, barren, and unprofitable is the natural heart, incapable of producing blossoms or fruits of holiness, till Christ the sun of righteousness arises with healing in his wings: by his mighty agency a glorious and universal change ensues; the soul is softened to sensibility; impregnated by his bright beams of love, it teems with life, the flowers of heavenly dispositions appear, the heart sings for joy in the good ways of God, and the fruits of grace bud forth to the glory of God.

(2.) To the state of believers under temptations, when storms of inward corruption, or despondent thoughts, beat against their souls: but when the Lord comes to their relief, they bud and blossom as the rose, the tears are wiped from their eyes, the voice of joy is heard, they sing as the birds, and bring forth fruit abundantly. Hear then this hour, thou tossed with tempest, and not comforted, hear this sweet voice of Jesus reiterating the call, *Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

3dly, We have,

1. The same gracious invitation continued: *O my dove,* to which creature the believer's soul may be compared; often *timorous*, through conscious weakness; *beautiful* in the feathers of silver, — the graces of the Spirit; *meeke* and inoffensive; *chaste* and faithful to Jesus as the turtle to her mate: *In the clefts of the rock;* fled to the shelter of a Saviour's side, opened by the spear, a small but sure retreat: *In the secret places of the stairs;* hid in Christ, and maintaining an intercourse with him which the world knoweth not of: or these expressions may intimate her guilty fears which led her to hide her head, and seek, like Adam in the

garden, a covert from her conscious shame; from which retirement, therefore, Christ would draw her forth: *Let me see thy countenance,* be not afraid or ashamed to come with open face into the assembly of the saints, where Jesus manifests his presence; *let me hear thy voice* in prayer and praise; *for sweet is thy voice;* inharmonious as to us it may appear, and unworthy as we think ourselves to open our polluted lips before him, he graciously condescends well-pleased to accept our lisping; *and thy countenance is comely;* loathsome as we seem in our own eyes, and covering our faces with confusion in the dust, he wipes away the defilement, and, transforming us into his own image, delights in the beauties which he bestows.

2. A charge is given to seize and remove what was hurtful to the vineyard. *Take us the foxes;* by foxes are meant false teachers, who with many fair speeches deceive the hearts of the unwary, and introduce errors, heresies, and schisms into the church; even *the little foxes,* which must be crushed in their nest, *that spoil the vines;* corrupting the faith, debauching the morals, and debasing the discipline of the church: *for our vines have tender grapes;* young converts, whose tender years, or weak attainments, need an especial guard against the wiles of deceivers. *Note;* Every corruption in the heart is a little fox, which would rob us of our comfort, and threatens to root up the vine of grace; we must watch over them therefore, and check the motions of evil in the birth.

3. The church exults in her interest in her Lord. *My beloved is mine;* mine as the gift of God; the faithful bridegroom united in bonds of divine love; *mine* in possession and enjoyment, all his things are *mine;* his merit and grace are *mine,* the property of the faithful soul, *and I am his,* the creature of his hand, the purchase of his blood; renewed by his Spirit, by choice devoted to him, subservient to his will, zealous for his interest, and living in love and duty for him alone: *he feedeth among the lilies,* manifesting himself in the midst of his people, beautiful as the lilies; or, as a shepherd crowned with wreaths of this sweet flower; he watches over the flock of his pasture, and feeds them with his divine consolations.

4. She expresses her expectation of his speedy coming: *Until the daybreak and the shadows flee away;* or, connected with the following clause, the words are a prayer for Christ's appearing, either incarnate to his Old Testament saints, or in the manifestation of his love to praying souls labouring under darkness and desertion, or in his glory at the great day of final consummation, when all the shadows of remaining ignorance, infirmity, affliction, will be forever fled away, and one eternal day of light, joy, and blessedness unutterable, succeed: *turn, my beloved, unto me, be thou like a roe, or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether,* or of separation; swift as the bounding roe, fly to relieve me from the pains of absence, and let no mountains separate my soul from thee; come with the comforts of thy love below, or take me to the enjoyment of thy blessed Self above! Amen.

## C H A P. III.

*In this chapter, (1.) The church earnestly seeks, and happily finds her beloved, who had withdrawn, ver. 1—5. (2.) The daughters of Jerusalem admire the excellencies of the church, ver. 6. (3.) The church admires Jesus Christ under the person of Solomon, his bed, and the life-guards about it, ver. 7, 8. His chariot, ver. 9, 10. And calls upon the daughters of Sion, who were admiring her, to admire him rather, especially as he appeared on his coronation-day, and the day of his nuptials, ver. 11.*

[Before Christ 1014.]

**B**Y night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.

2 I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.

3 The watchmen that go about the city found me: *to whom I said*, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?

4 *It was* but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him and would not let him go, until I had

brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.

5 I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake *my* love, till he please.

6 ¶ Who *is* this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?

7 Behold his bed, which *is* Solomon's; threescore valiant men *are* about it, of the valiant of Israel.

8 They all hold swords, *being* expert in war: every man *batth* his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night.

9 King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon.

10 He made the pillars thereof *of* silver, the bottom thereof *of* gold, the covering of it *of* purple, the midst thereof being paved *with* love, for the daughters of Jerusalem.

## C H A P. III.

*Ver. 2. I will rise now, &c.] I will rise now, and go about the city. In the streets and in the broad-ways will I seek him, &c. It might be rendered, in the passages and open avenues, or squares. New Translation.*

*Ver. 5. I charge you, &c.] Here ends the second eclogue. This day's eclogue contains the hope and calling of the church; Christ's care of her; the profession of her love, her faith and hope, together with her fight, and victory in temptation. The leaping upon the mountains, like a roe or young hart, expresses the readiness wherewith Christ comes to do the will of God, joyfully surmounting all difficulties and discouragements; gradually revealing himself, chap. ii. 8, 9. and thus addressing himself to the church; "Awake, thou who art most dear unto me, and leave these dark representations of me; for now the time is past wherein ignorance, error, and wickedness overflowed the world as floods do the earth in the winter season. Those cloudy and uncomfortable days are over, wherein thou couldst see and enjoy but little of me, ver. 10, 11. All tokens of a new world appear, and invite thee to come and partake of those joys which the nearer approaches of the Son of righteousness produce; who makes all manner of blessings spring up in such abundance, that it causes the heavenly host to sing for joy; and therefore cannot but fill all believers with thankful hymns to him; ver. 12. and for this especially, that their dead hopes are revived, and they receive the earnest and beginnings of that future bliss, the expectation of which is our greatest comfort in this life, and the consummation of it our highest happiness in the next; and therefore I say again, Awake, &c." The church*

expresses her satisfaction in this invitation, and her strong desire for further and nearer communications with her lovely and beloved heavenly Bridegroom; and gives a caution to her companions, the ministers and preachers of the word, to use their earliest diligence to discover and confute the sophistry of deceivers, who craftily insinuate their false doctrines into weak and unwary souls, and thereby too often seduce those who are newly converted, or but infirm in the faith. The church then declares the mutual love between her and her Saviour; professing that she will have nothing to do with those seducing spirits, but adhere to him alone whose dwelling is not among the subtle and crafty, but with simple and candid souls, ver. 16.—  
"Only let him be pleased to vouchsafe his gracious presence with me, and to enlighten me more and more, till I have a full knowledge of his will, and the light thereof scatter all the shadows of the law. Let my beloved also make haste to succour and relieve me in all difficulties and distresses, and shew the same readiness for my preservation and increase in the divine life, which he did for my first salvation, ver. 7. For in the night of doubt and persecution I sought him; I sought him in holy books and among holy men, chap. iii: 1, 2. But he was distant from me, and I could gain no intelligence of him. At length some of the ministers and instructors of his people gave such satisfaction to my inquiries, ver. 3. that my soul was soon blessed with his divine presence and the full communication of his love: in which I rejoiced, and in which I will rest with delight, ver. 4, 5."

*Ver. 6. Who is this that cometh, &c.] This is the beginning of the third day's eclogue.*

*Ver. 10. The bottom thereof of gold] The inside thereof of gold;*

11 Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown where-with his mother crowned him in the day of

his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.

gold; the covering of it of purple; the middle thereof is wrought in needle-work by her whom he loveth best among the daughters of Jerusalem. Houbigant.

Ver. 11. *With the crown, &c.*] The original word עטרה *atarah*, is derived from the root, טרף *atar*, which signifies to encompass or surround; and is the same as is used to express a royal crown. 2 Sam. xii. 30. 1 Chron. xx. 11.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. The church seeking her Lord. *By night on my bed;* either this refers to the Mosaic dispensation, when, comparatively, darkness covered the earth; or to the condition of too many believers in every age, who, through neglect of watchfulness, know some dark seasons when they lament after an absent Christ; or this signifies the dull and sluggish frame into which she had fallen through sloth and worldly ease, which had provoked the Saviour to withdraw; yet, whatever declensions had grown upon her, she could still say, *I sought him whom my soul loveth;* her love was grown comparatively cold, and with too much lukewarmness she continued to seek him: *I sought him, but I found him not,* as the punishment of her unfaithfulness, or because she used so little importunity in the pursuit, her prayers negligent, her attention in the ordinances distracted, and her ears dull of hearing.

2. Perceiving her deadness and distance from him, in the power of divine grace she resolves more earnestly to seek his face. *I will rise now* from the bed of sloth, and without delay go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth; discouraged by no difficulties, and persevering notwithstanding repeated disappointments, diligent in the use of every appointed means, and in some of his holy ordinances hoping at last to meet him: *I sought him, but I found him not;* that melancholy strain is repeated, and paints the anguish of her disappointment: we must not, however, give over, if we do not meet in the way of duty with all the comfort that we expected, but patiently wait, and be found still in God's way. Therefore,

3. She applies to the watchmen of the city, whom she met, for information; the ministers of the word, whose office and business it is to direct poor wandering souls to Jesus; they found me bewildered in my search, and as they appeared solicitous and able to direct my steps, I said, *Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?* no other description was necessary, the object of her longing regards was known to them. *Notes.* (1.) They who are under soul distress, are bound to apply to the ministers of Christ, whose advice he will bless to their relief. (2.) A soul that knows the value of the Lord Jesus will never rest, seeking till it finds him.

4. This was the blessed case of the distressed church. *It was but a little that I passed from them:* observing, probably, the directions they had given, though their answer is not mentioned; or when means and ministers all failed,

Christ came to answer all her importunate desires; *I found him whom my soul loveth:* none ever were at last disappointed, who in patient perseverance sought his face; and the more difficulties we have encountered and conquered, the sweeter will the divine comfort be at last, when all the desires of our hearts shall be granted, and our souls filled with his love.

5. Having found him, she resolved now to keep him, and never more to part from him. *I held him* in the arms of faith and love, and would not let him go: he seemed reluctant to stay, yet meant only to excite her importunity, and exercise her graces; *until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me:* which may signify either that the soul who finds the Lord Jesus will make open profession of him in the visible church, which may be regarded as our common mother; or that she was determined to hold fast on Christ during all the trials of her militant state on earth, till he should bring her to that *Jerusalem which is above, which is the mother of us all.*

6. She gives a solemn charge not to disturb her Lord. Those who have felt the pains of absence will be more peculiarly jealous, lest they should again provoke the Saviour to depart from them. *I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please,* neither speak nor move so as to offend him; but, watchfully observant of whatever would disturb or displease him, keep your hearts with all diligence. *Note;* They who would keep Christ when they have found him, must be careful how they walk, and solicitous to please him well in all things.

7. The daughters of Jerusalem, on beholding this happy meeting of Christ and his church, break forth into an inquiry full of admiration. *Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness;* either the wilderness of corruption, in which the souls even of all the faithful once lay, unable to extricate themselves from the mazes of error and sin, till Christ arose to lead them in paths of everlasting peace; or the wilderness of desertion and affliction, such as was the case of the church just before, when Jesus was absent from her, and she lamented after him; but now having found him, what a change appears! no more weeping, mourning, afflicted, she lifts up her head with joy, and marches boldly on, *like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense;* as the smoke from the altar ascended in curling volumes, so do her burning affections rise up to God; and the lively exercise of her graces, through the nearness of Jesus, gives a savour of a sweet smell, acceptable and well-pleasing to God through Jesus Christ; *with all the powders of the merchant;* the Redeemer is the merchant, who from afar hath brought the sweet perfume; the graces we exercise, the services we offer, come not from ourselves, but him; to him therefore for ever be the praise.

2dly; The church desires to turn the eyes of the daughters of Jerusalem from admiring her, to an object far

## C H A P. IV.

In this chapter, (1.) Jesus Christ having espoused his church to himself, (chap. iii. 11.) highly commends her beauty in the several instances of it, concluding her fair, all fair, ver. 1—5. and again, ver. 7. (2.) He retires himself, and invites her with him, from the mountains of terror to those of delight, ver. 6. 8. (3.) He professeth his love to her, and his delight in her affection to him, ver. 9. 14. (4.) She ascribes all she had that was valuable in her to him, and depends upon the continued influence of his grace, to make her more and more acceptable to him, ver. 15, 16.

[Before Christ 1014.]

**B**EHOLD, thou art fair, my love; behold thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of

far more worthy of their regard, even to Solomon, the type of the divine Messiah, the chief of ten thousand. Three things she points out to them as worthy their highest admiration.

1. His bed. Behold, his bed, his church, or the hearts of his faithful people, in which he takes up his rest for ever, which is Solomon's the prince of peace; *threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel*; the ministers of the sanctuary, men strong in faith, and mighty in word and deed, who watch that nothing may disturb the peace of the church, or hurt her members. They all hold swords, being expert in war, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; and know how to wield it in such a manner as to vanquish the powers of darkness: every man hath his sword upon his thigh; ready armed for every exigence, having the scriptures stored up in their memory, and able to apply them on every emergence, according to the circumstances of the case, because of fear in the night; when, in seasons of temptation or persecution, God's people are distressed and alarmed, they are prepared to stand by them and to encourage and comfort them.

2. His chariot. King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon; which may signify the human nature of Christ; or the ministration of the gospel, in which he appears in the riches of his grace, admired of all that believe, riding prosperously in triumphant majesty, attended by the acclamations of his faithful subjects; and his enemies, death, hell, and sin, bound as vanquished at his chariot-wheels. The wood of Lebanon denotes the perpetuity of the gospel word, and its fragrance the great and precious promises therein contained; the pillars of silver, the floor of gold, the covering of purple, may represent its purity, excellence, and stability; the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem; God therein appears to be all love and mercy to poor and perishing sinners, and he is pleased to take up the yielding faithful soul to sit with him, to behold and partake of his glory.

3. The royal diadem on his head. Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, converted souls, who are called out of themselves to Christ, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals; either the day when ascending to the skies Jesus was crowned king of glory, and all power in heaven and

goats, that appear from mount Gilead.

2 Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them.

3 Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate within the locks.

4 Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.

5 Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies.

earth given unto him; or the day when the soul of the sinner, called by the Divine word and Spirit into the fellowship of the gospel, yields to be saved by grace, and beholds Jesus, the heavenly bridegroom, with open arms ready to receive her, owns how worthy he is, who hath borne the cross, to wear the crown, and with delight embraces the gospel-covenant, in which the Saviour betrothes us to himself in mercy and loving-kindness; and this time is a time of love, and gladness of his heart; then Jesus beholds in us the travail of his soul, and we can say, My spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour.

## C H A P. IV.

Ver. 1. Thy hair is as a flock, &c.] Thy hair is fine as that of a flock of goats, which come up sleek from mount Gilead. Bochart refers the comparison to the hair of the eastern goats, which is of the most delicate silky softness. Le Clerc observes, that the hair of the goats in Palestine is generally of a black colour, or of a very dark brown. Michaelis thinks the interpretation of this difficult place to be, Thy hair is like a flock of ascending goats, which is seen from mount Gilead; supposing the point of comparison chiefly to turn on the head's being covered with fine flowing locks, as mount Gilead was with the shaggy herd, reaching in an extended line from its foot to its summit. Houbigant renders it, that hang from mount Gilead: pendit; as Virgil, dumosa pendere procul de rupe. See the New Translation.

Ver. 2. Whereof every one bear twins] Which are all of them twins, and none hath lost its fellow. New Translation.

Ver. 3. Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet] Thy lips are like a braid of scarlet, &c. Thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate—like the section of a pomegranate, &c. See New Translation, and Bishop Lowth's Prelections.

Ver. 4. Thy neck is like the tower of David] Thy neck is like the tower of David, built upon an eminence. This tower of David was probably remarkable for the elegance and nice proportion of its structure. This is Houbigant's interpretation. But some render the clause, built with battlements, or running up into spires. See Michaelis and the New Translation.

Ver.

6 Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.

7 Thou art all fair, my love; *there is no spot in thee.*

8 ¶ Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards.

9 Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.

10 How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!

11 Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honey-comb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.

12 A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.

13 Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard;

*Ver. 6. Mountain of Myrrh, &c.]* Myrrh and frankincense were among the most valuable perfumes of the East: the bridegroom therefore concludes his encomium on the bride's person, by comparing her to an entire heap of those precious essences, and observing that she is completely fair and excellent. In this day's eclogue, the church, says our English Bible, glorieth in Christ, and Christ setteth forth the graces of the church. The beauty, the glory, the happiness of Solomon, are but figures of that heavenly bridegroom, and that heavenly host, who secure the church in her enjoyments, and take care of her continual safety, ver. 7, 8. Nor can any representations, however elegant, sufficiently express the love of God, and the riches of his grace, in the great and precious promises, far dearer to all believers than thousands of gold and silver; which the gospel calls us not only to behold, but to enjoy, ver. 10. and in the view of which, faithful hearts cannot fail to admire and extol the surpassing glory of that great king, who shall appear clothed with glory, honour, and joy, on that happy day, when he shall publicly own the church of his faithful followers, and give her the highest testimony of his love; (See Rev. xix. 6—9.) even that mystical body of Christ, whose virgin modesty, chap. iv. 1. whose pure and amiable discourse, including the candour, excellence, and instruction, of her ministers and teachers; and, in one word, whose admirable perfection of beauty has already so engaged his heart. See ver. 7. and Eph. v. 27.

*Ver. 8. Come, &c.]* Here begins the fourth day's eclogue, in which the bridegroom professes himself the bride's protector, &c. ver. 8, &c. In the first place, he gives the bride to understand that she is now under the cover of his protection, and is to apply to him only for relief under all dangers and difficulties. This, according to the Eastern manner, he does in the way of parable or figure; supposing her placed on the tops of mountains infested by wild beasts, whence he invites her to himself, as to a place of safety, and gives her to understand, that, now he is her guardian, she may look down in security amidst any dangers of which she was apprehensive, ver. 8. He then publicly declares, that she is a garden secured from intruders—an inaccessible spring, whose waters are unpolluted—an unfulfilled fountain under the sanction of an unbroken seal. And, having here compared her to a garden, he pursues the figure, and supposes all the finest and most precious

vegetable productions to enrich and embellish it, ver. 13—15. She, catching up the metaphor, wishes that this garden, for which he has expressed so much fondness, might be so breathed on by the kindly gales, as to produce whatever might contribute to his delight, ver. 16. The bridegroom returns the encomium, chap. v. 1. and professes that his wish is completely accomplished; and, still keeping up the metaphor, he invites his friends to rejoice with him. See New Translation.

*Come with me from Lebanon, &c.]* Come to me from Lebanon, &c. look down securely from the top. The summits of the mountains here mentioned were inhabited by wild beasts. Judæa was especially infested by lions. Lebanon, Amana, Shenir, and Hermon, were all of them places where some dangers were to be apprehended; and it is a usual beauty in poetry, to represent a general idea by particulars which largely partake of it, as here dangers by dangerous places. See New Translation, Michaelis, and Bishop Pococke's description of the East, p. 122. 136.

*Ver. 11. Thy lips—drop as the honey-comb]* Expressing her sweet, her divine, words; a metaphor common with the Greek as well as the Oriental writers. See Theocritus's 20th Idyllium.

*The smell of thy garments]* In the East, where perfumes are exceedingly common, the garments on nuptial occasions were remarkably perfumed. See Psalm xlv. which uses the same figure, and is, like to this, a beautiful epithalamium on the marriage of Christ and his church. Lebanon abounded with various odoriferous trees, from which the finest gums were extracted, particularly frankincense; whence some derive the name of Lebanon from לבונה *lebonah*, frankincense. See Chambers's Dictionary, and the New Translation.

*Ver. 12. A garden inclosed, &c.]* See the note on ver. 8.

*Ver. 13. Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates]* The productions are a paradise of pomegranates, with delicious fruits, cypress, and spikenard. The bridegroom, having in a former sentence called the bride an inclosed garden, here carries on the metaphor, and compares her virtues and accomplishments to all the choicest productions of an Eastern orchard, or of a paradise. *Delicious fruits*, is in the Hebrew, literally, *Fruits of sweetness*. See Le Clerc, and the New Translation.

14 Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices:

15 A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.

*Ver. 14. Calamus, &c.] Sweet cane, and cinnamon, with all kinds of trees of incense, myrrh, and cedar-oil, &c.*

*Ver. 15. A fountain of gardens, &c.] Houbigant reads it, A living fountain, a fountain of living waters, flowing as it were from Lebanon.*

*Ver. 16. Awake, O north wind]* The bride here takes up the metaphor, and wishes that she could produce any thing to invite or please him. The author of the *Observations*, remarking that the south wind is extremely hot and troublesome in Palestine, gives a very different interpretation of this text from the usual one. None, I presume, says he, will deny, that the first word may signify *awake* or *arise*; all the hesitation, therefore, must be about the second, *And come, thou south*, which, I suppose, really signifies, *Enter into thy repositories*. That צפ צפ' *jatza*, and בוא בוא' *boa*, with their derivatives, are directly opposed to each other, we may learn from 2 Sam. iii. 25. צפ' *Jatza* is frequently applied to the *causing the wind to blow*, Psal. cxxxv. 7. Jer. x. 13. and li. 16. Consequently the verb בוא בוא' *boa*, should signify the direct contrary; that is, *its ceasing to blow*, or its entering into its repository; just as צפ' *jatza* is used to express the rising of the sun, its coming out of its chamber, Psal. xix. and בוא בוא' *boa* its setting, or entering into it, Deut. xi. 30. Josh. i. 4.; and so the true explanation of the words will be, "*Arise, O north wind, (and retire, thou south,) blow upon my garden; let the spices thereof flow forth; that my beloved may come into his garden, invited by the coolness and fragrantcy of the air, and may eat his pleasant fruits.*" *Observations*, p. 41.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. The description of the church's beauty, and that of every gracious soul which bears the Divine image: however despicable they appear in the eyes of men, or in their own, Christ regards them with delight and love; in his eyes they are *fair*; his *love*, loving him and beloved by him; and all the marks of beauty center in them; since they are found in him, and that he is, is theirs, and his grace makes them what he describes them.

The images here used are taken from the human form, and the beauties of the body are transferred to the hidden man of the heart.

*The eyes of doves* within the locks represent the modesty and humility, the sweetness and inoffensiveness of the genuine believer.

*The hair* compared to that of a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead, may signify the multitude of converts in the church; or the beauty of their outward walk or conversation, visible to all as the hair flowing in ringlets on the shoulders, or a flock of goats feeding on a distant precipice.

*The teeth*, even as a flock of sheep new shorn, white as their fleeces when come up from washing, may denote ministers in particular, who prepare the food for the infant

16 ¶ Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, *that* the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.

converts, and in the purity of their lives adorn the doctrine which they profess, and, blest with success in their ministry, see numerous souls begotten in the gospel by their word, and none are barren among them; whatever superior gifts some may possess, or more abundant fruit may crown their labours, all who preach the truth are sure to see some fruit thereof. This may be applied also to believers in general, who feed upon the word of truth, are washed in the laver of regeneration, ascend upwards in their affections, and are fruitful in all good works.

*The lips like a thread of scarlet* may be considered as a mark of that florid health, and flourishing state of grace, in which the soul abides; or as the following words may explain them: *Thy speech is comely*, before men, in all gracious conversation, while the hearers delighted hang upon the speaker's lips; or before God, in prayer and praise, offered through the blood of Jesus, and therefore most pleasing and acceptable.

*The temples like a piece of pomegranate* within the locks, the colour of the fruit of which being red, may be applied to the conscious blush, with which a sense of his own unworthiness, in the presence of his Lord, covers the believer, and heightens his beauty.

*The neck* compared to a tower, built for an armoury, filled with the shields of the mighty, may represent the ministers of the sanctuary, who are next to Christ the head, and furnish believers with the spiritual weapons of their warfare: or it may be referred to the saints in general, who are each a strong tower filled with Divine artillery.

*The breasts like two young roes that are twins*, may be applied to the ministers, who give the sincere milk of the word; or, under the Christian dispensation, to the Old and New Testaments, those fountains of consolation.

2. The heavenly bridegroom retires for a while to wait till his beauteous bride hath made herself ready. *Till the day of eternity break, and the shadows of mortality flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the bill of frankincense*; to the heavenly hill, whither the smoke of prayer and praise continually ascends, and whither the glorified Saviour is gone till the time of consummation.

3. Wherever he is, on earth or in heaven, he has the same regard for his spouse the church, and for every individual faithful soul. *Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee*; he sees none, his blood hath washed out every stain, and his Spirit fashions her throughout anew, so that she appears in perfect beauty, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, Eph. v. 27, &c.

2dly, Christ delights in his church, and wishes for her company at all times: Therefore,

1. He invites her to come with him, and adds the most endearing name to engage her to follow him, *My spouse*, that nearest, dearest relation; and which should, both from love and duty, constrain her to cleave to him; *come with me*



## CHAP. V.

In this chapter we have, (1.) *Christ's gracious acceptance of the invitation which his church had given him, and the kind visit which he made to her, ver. 1.* (2.) *The account which the spouse gives of her own folly in putting a slight upon her beloved, and the distress she was in by reason of his withdrawing, ver. 2—8.* (3.) *The inquiry of the daughters of Jerusalem concerning the amiable perfections of her beloved,*

ver. 9. and her particular answer to that inquiry, ver. 10—16. Unto you that believe, he is thus precious.

[Before Christ 1014.]

**I** AM come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honey-comb with

me from Lebanon, or thou shalt come with me; it is a gracious call to do so, or a gracious promise of being enabled for that which Jesus doth enjoin: *Lebanon* may signify Jerusalem, adorned with the wood of Lebanon, but become a den of thieves and murderers, out of which he calls his people to depart; or, as *Lebanon* was a goodly mountain, it may be a command to quit the joys of sense, and earth's vain pleasures and pursuits, to taste the purer delights which flow from a sense of his love: *look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards*, which frequented those places: and such is this world, full of wicked men, fierce and cruel in their tempers as lions, spotted with sin as the leopard's skin, crafty, and lying in wait to destroy like these devouring animals: From such to depart, therefore, is but to consult our own safety; and to leave the ways of a world lying in wickedness, for communion with the Lord of life and glory, must be an exchange unspeakably to our own comfort.

2. Christ expresses his delight in his spouse, whom he honours also with another title, *My Sister*; for he is by his incarnation flesh of our flesh, and by adoption we are brought into that family, where he is the first-born of many brethren; *thou hast ravished my heart*, or, *thou hast wounded my heart*; intimating the strength of his affection to her; it drew him down from his throne in glory, and made him humble himself to death, and even shed his blood on a cross for her sake; behold how he loved her! *Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, or one glance*; for no sooner does the eye of faith look to him, but his arms of love are reached forth to embrace the soul; *with one chain of thy neck*, the pearls of divine grace, which adorn the temper and conversation of the saints, make them amiable in the eyes of their divine Lord; and this he with transport professes: *How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse!* love to Jesus is the most grateful and pleasing oblation: He asks our hearts; and nothing but this inward genuine affection is in his sight of any price: *how much better is thy love than wine!* more cheering than wine to the weary, or more acceptable than all the drink-offerings which were poured forth at his altar; *and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!* the graces of the Spirit in her breathed a sweeter perfume than the spices which ascended in smoke from the golden altar of incense. *Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honey-comb*; the sweetest words of humble prayer and praise, of warm professions of love and duty; or communicating to all around that good conversation which ministers grace to the hearers: *honey and milk are under thy tongue*; the doctrines of the gospel, so pleasant and so refreshing to the soul, of which the pious delight to speak, for their own and others' edification and comfort; *and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon*; the garments of that

holy profession which they make, and adorn with every good word and work, and which render them amiable in the eyes of God, and respected before men.

3. He compares her to a *garden inclosed*; separated from the world without, and set apart for himself; small, compared with the vast country around it; fenced from all intruders by Almighty love and power; planted with every choice seed of grace, and bringing forth fruit for every faithful soul unto eternal life: *a spring shut up, a fountain sealed*: such are the souls of the faithful, sealed of Christ for his own, and shut up to be no more polluted by sin. *Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, &c.* the garden of the church is full of trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord; bearing all the richest fruits of grace, perfuming the place of their abode by their good conversation, most excellent and valuable in themselves, esteemed of Christ, and mutual comforts to each other.

3dly, We have the reply of the church on hearing herself thus commended, ascribing to her Lord the praise of all.

1. He is to her a *fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon*; or, *O fountain of gardens, &c.* as the words may be rendered, and immediately addressed to him. Christ is the glorious fountain-head, whence all our waters of grace and consolation flow; the author of all our fruitfulness, and the source of every blessing in time and in eternity; whatever we have we receive from him, and every gracious soul will ascribe the whole to him.

2. She prays for the influences of his blessed Spirit, that her garden may flourish, and, breathing fragrance, invite Christ's pleasing visits thither, and afford him satisfaction. *Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden*: by these winds may be signified the operations of the Spirit, in his word, providences, and ordinances, suited to the case and necessities of the soul, as may most effectually conduce to its strength, comfort, and fruitfulness: sometimes the north wind of adversity is needful; and always the south wind of divine manifestations, to warm the heart, or to quicken it from its coldness, and to draw forth the graces into lively exercise, *that the spices thereof may flow out* in warm affections towards God and man, in zeal for his glory, in exemplary diligence to adorn our profession, and, in short, in every good word and work: *let my beloved come into his garden*, then, when thus breathing fragrance, let him visit our souls with a full sense of his presence and love; for we are *his garden*, purchased by his blood, sanctified by his grace, and by choice devoted to him; let him come *and eat his pleasant fruits*: whatever fruits of holiness we bear, it is by virtue of our union with him, who is the living root: he is the great author of all good in us, and takes delight in the works of his own hand; and this especially is what the believer longs for,

my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.

2 ¶ I sleep, but my heart waketh: *it is* the voice of my beloved that knocketh, *saying*, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, *and* my locks with the drops of the night.

3 I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?

4 My beloved put in his hand by the hole *of the door*, and my bowels were moved for him.

5 I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped *with* myrrh, and my fingers *with* sweet-smelling myrrh, upon the

handles of the lock.

6 I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, *and* was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.

7 The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.

8 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him that I *am* sick of love.

9 ¶ What *is* thy beloved more than *another* beloved, O thou fairest among women? what *is* thy beloved more than *another* beloved, that thou dost so charge us?

that he may find gracious acceptance and favour with his divine Lord.

#### CHAP. V.

*Ver. 1. I have eaten my honey-comb, &c.*] Taylor, in his Concordance, interprets this passage, *I have eaten my pure wood honey with the honey of the pan*; explaining *wood honey* to be that which in hot weather bursts the comb, and runs down the hollow trees or rocks, where, in Judæa, the bees made great store of honey. This interpretation has some considerable authorities in its favour: yet our rendering is supported by 1 Sam. xiv. 27. and *שֶׁבֶט debasb*, is evidently *the honey of bees* in Judg. xiv. 8, 9. 18. The verbs in this verse should be read throughout in the present tense; and the last clause might be rendered, *Yea, drink abundantly of our loves*. This invitation is only metaphorical, the bridegroom calling upon his friends to come and feast upon the fruit of their mutual happiness. Christ, in this day's eclogue, to use the words of our English bible, sheweth his love to the church, who prayeth to be made fit for his presence, ver. 16. while he awakeneth the church with his calling. The 8th verse of the preceding chapter contains Christ's assurance of protection to his church from the rage and cruelty of persecutors, while, to encourage the church's confidence, he expresses strongly the satisfaction he has in the unity and graces of her members, ver. 9, 10. in the excellence and purity of her doctrines, ver. 11. and, in short, in that divine composition of graces, which is visible in the church, and which makes her members acceptable to God, and useful to men, ver. 12—14;—virtues and graces which are preserved in life and vigour by that heavenly doctrine which flows from Him as plentifully and as perpetually as waters do from the springs of Mount Lebanon, ver. 15. On this declaration of his love, the church earnestly intreats to be made worthy of it; praying that the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and his manifold gifts, may not be wanting to her, but breathe perpetually upon her, as the cooling winds do upon a pleasant garden; thus rendering her a paradise indeed, not only enabling

her to fill the world with the sweet odour of the knowledge of Christ, but giving her boldness to invite Him, the beloved of her soul, to come and reap the delightful fruits of his own care and labour, ver. 16. We are promised that no petitions for the Divine Spirit sent up from believing hearts, shall be rejected. Christ therefore replies with much complacency to his spouse, chap. v. 1.—“I am well pleased to see the fruitfulness of my garden, and therefore have not denied thy request; but am present in it, and have brought it to such perfection, that it hath produced many excellent persons, more precious than myrrh and all the spices before-named, with whose services I am not only well pleased, but I rejoice in the purity of their doctrine, and of their lives; inviting all who bear any love to me, both in heaven and earth, to rejoice and be exceedingly glad with me.” See Luke xv. 7—10.

*Ver. 2. I sleep, but my heart waketh*] The fifth day's eclogue commences here; and contains a solemn declaration from the bridegroom, that he prefers his spouse to all others, chap. vi. 9. The word *תַּמְנַתִּי tammathi*, rendered *my undefiled*, signifies *completely accomplished*; one consummately possessed of all endowments both of body and mind. New Translation.

*Ver. 4. Put in his hand by the hole of the door*] *Through the opening of the door.*

*Ver. 6. My soul failed when he spake*] *My soul failed at the remembrance of his words.* New Translation.

*Ver. 7. The watchmen that went about the city*] *The watchmen that go about the city, found me; they smote me, they hurt me: the keepers of the walls plucked my veil off me.*

*Ver. 8. I charge you, O daughters, &c.*] *I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved—What should you tell him, but that I am sick of love?* Thus we have a beautiful *apostrophe*, which is lost in the common translation. Houbigant gives part of these words to the *virgins*, thus; *What should we tell him?* SPOUSE. *That I am sick of love.*

*Ver.*

10 My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.

11 His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven.

12 His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set.

13 His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh.

14 His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.

*Ver. 10. My beloved is white and ruddy] Fair and bright. Bochart. The chiefest among ten thousand. Pitts, in his account of his return from Mecca, thus describes those lights by which they travel in the night in the desert, and which are carried on the tops of high poles, to direct their march: "They are somewhat like iron stoves, into which they put short dry wood, with which some of the camels are loaded: It is carried in great sacks, which have a hole near the bottom, where the servants take it out, as they see the fires need a recruit. Every cottor hath one of these poles belonging to it, some of which have ten, some twelve of these lights on their tops, more or less; and they are likewise of different figures, as well as numbers; one perhaps oval, or like a gate; another triangular, or like an N, or M, &c. so that every one knows by them his respective cottor. They are carried in the front, and set up in the place where the caravan is to pitch, before that comes up, at some distance from each other. They are also carried by day, not lighted; but yet by the figure and number of them the Haggas are directed to what cottor they belong, as soldiers are by their colours where to rendezvous: and without such directions it would be impossible to avoid confusion in such a vast number of people." This account may tend to throw some light upon the present passage. The spouse says, My beloved is white and ruddy; the chiefest among ten thousand; or, as the margin of our English Bibles has it, a standard-bearer among ten thousand. All the ground for making these words synonymous, is, I presume, the supposing the standard-bearer to be the chiefest of the company; which by no means appears to be true: it is not so among the modern people of the East, any more than among us. I will not however press this, since what is meant is, One before whom a standard is borne; which is a mark of dignity in the East, as well as in the West; and which the word must signify, if any thing of this sort, any dignity be meant, since דגול dagul, is a passive, not an active participle in the Hebrew; that is to say, the word does not signify "one who lifts up a banner," but "one whom the lifting up of the banner some way respects or concerns." It is not, however, so natural upon the whole to understand this passage of one before whom an ensign of dignity was borne, because the original word is most probably to be understood of a portable beacon, which is necessary to travellers in the night, but not, as far as I know, ever considered as a mark of dignity, on the one hand; whilst, on the other, a very easy sense may be put on the word, if it be understood of one of those eastern flambeaux; for in that view the participle paul of the verb will signify enlightened, and consequently dazzling, glittering, or something of that kind; and so the meaning of the spouse will appear to have probably been, (the words being now considered in their literal sense,) that her bridegroom was dazzling beyond ten thousand, or*

was dazzling like a person surrounded with ten thousand lights. It may not be unsuitable to add, that those places which speak of the standards of the tribes, and this which I am now endeavouring to illustrate, are all the passages in which the Hebrew word דגול dagal, occurs; excepting Psal. xx. 5. and chap. ii. 4. The word beacon occurs indeed in another place in our version; Isai. xxx. 17.; but it is not there, in the original, that word which I am supposing to signify a portable beacon, but another; which may possibly incline the learned reader not to admit that sense which I have affixed to this passage, and which I have been illustrating, as unwilling to suppose that there are two words in so limited a language to signify a beacon: It ought, however, to be remembered, that though our version renders תורן toren, a beacon, it properly signifies no more than a sign, whatever that sign might be; whether the raising of a spear, or displaying a flag, or any thing else. See Observations, p. 227, &c.

*Ver. 11. His head is as the most fine gold] A metaphorical expression, to denote consummate excellence in beauty.*

*Ver. 12. And fitly set] Sitting at the full streams. The literal meaning is, "His eyes are sparkling and yet mild, like those of milk-white doves, when they are delighted as they fit by the water-side." See Patrick, Bochart, &c.*

*Ver. 13. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, &c.] His cheeks are as a bed of spices, sweetly budding forth. Bishop Patrick supposes that the word translated lilies, alludes to a sort of lilies of a deep rich red colour, and particularly to that called by Pliny, rubens lilium, which he tells us was much esteemed in Syria. The expression of lilies dropping sweet-smelling or precious myrrh, denotes the sweetness of his conversation; and it is supposed by Sir Thomas Brown to refer to the roscid and honey drops observable in the flowers of Martagon, and inverted-flowered lilies: it is probably the standing sweet dew on the white eyes of the crown imperial, now common among us, which is here figuratively used. See his Observations, and the New Translation.*

*Ver. 14. His hands are as gold rings] His hands are as gold finely turned, beset with a chrysolite. New Translation. Michaelis renders it, His hands are golden cylinders, set with chrysolites. The chrysolite is of a gold colour.*

REFLECTIONS.—Ist, Swift are the returns of prayer; the request is no sooner asked than granted: I.o! Christ is here. I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; he admits the garden to be his own, and willingly visits the soul that by faith waits for his coming; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; all the produce is his own, and he delights in the gifts and graces that he hath bestowed; I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey; the doctrines of his gospel, in the faithful dispensation of which he delights; I have drunk my wine with my milk; sitting at the table of his

15 His legs *are* as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance *is* as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.

16 His mouth *is* most sweet, yea, he *is* altogether lovely. This *is* my beloved, and this *is* my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

his grace, and partaking of the banquet which his spouse, like Esther, hath provided; yet she can give him only of his own: nor doth he partake alone of the provision, but welcomes and invites all his friends, the faithful members of his church, to come and sup with him: *eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved;* in the gospel there *is* grace abounding; and whosoever will may come and feast upon the wine and milk, the great and precious promises contained in the word of God, without money and without price.

2dly, After the sweet communion which had passed between Christ and his church, we have a sad account of the interruption which arose from her security and slothful Spirit: negligent of her mercies, she is punished by having them withdrawn.

1. Sleep stole upon her. *I sleep;* alas! unfaithfulness brought on a decay of grace; and, through the prevalence of corruption, her heart grew cold and careless in too great a degree: yet there was still a strong desire after the Bridegroom; *my heart waketh:* though temptation prevailed, there was still a struggle.

2. Christ will not leave the soul in a backsliding state without warning. *It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh:* he is still beloved in some measure; and his voice, though indistinctly heard, is known: he knocks at the door of the heart, by the calls of his word, the convictions of his Spirit, and the alarms of his providences; and he pleads hard for admittance, with every endearing appellation: *Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled;* nothing can engage our hearts, if his love doth not: this he pleads as the most constraining argument; and adds what he has suffered on her account: *My head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night,* particularly of that fatal night when he agonized in the garden, and when his head was crowned with thorns, and covered with clotted gore. How stupid must be the heart which remains unaffected by such amazing grace! how grievous to requite such dying love with coldness and neglect!

3. With frivolous excuses she wants to cover her sinful slothfulness; as a person undressed and in bed, whose feet are washed, fears to dirty them, and hates to be disturbed, so she cared not to expose herself to any inconveniences for his sake, and rather chose to sleep on still and take her rest. *Note;* (1.) They who want to turn away from Christ, have always some pretext for their conduct. (2.) When we have once given way to corruption, and grown negligent in the path of duty, we shall find the difficulties of returning to it exceedingly great.

4. Christ by his power and grace overcomes our corruption, when we return to him in prayer and faith. *My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door,* to unbar it, and open himself a passage to her heart; and this effectually wrought upon her: for,

5. *My bowels were moved for him;* gracious relentings, and a sense of base ingratitude, began to work; love kindled afresh in her heart, and she could no longer contain. *I rose up to open to my beloved,* shook off dull sloth, and ran to

meet him, *and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh, upon the bands of the lock,* with tears of bitter and penitential sorrow for her unfaithfulness, which were to Christ a favour of a sweet smell; or when she put her hands on the lock, she found the sweet favour of his grace; for those who draw near to Christ will, by blessed experience, ever taste how good the Lord is.

6. To her bitter disappointment, when she expected to meet her beloved, he was withdrawn in displeasure at her slothfulness. *I opened to my beloved to give him a welcome reception; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone,* and left her to mourn her folly and negligence; or departed, to prove her sincerity and earnestness in searching after him; and with grief and eagerness she cries, He is gone, he is gone: *my soul failed when he spake:* either at his parting in displeasure, or at the kind language that he used, which served to upbraid her base ingratitude. *Note;* (1.) When we have been faithless, no wonder if, even after our return, the Lord punish us by leaving us comfortless for a time. (2.) A soul, that hath ever tasted the sweetness of communion with Jesus, must be hardened indeed by unfaithfulness, if she do not grieve at his absence. (3.) It is a gracious symptom of some remaining grace, when the heart possesses tender sensibility, and feels the evil and ingratitude of its departures from God.

7. She sets herself to seek him, but meets with sad discouragement. *I sought him,* in the ordinances of his service, and the courts of his house, *but I could not find him:* I called him aloud, in fervent prayer, *but he gave me no answer,* no sensible tokens of his regard. Nay, she was not only forsaken, but abused, while through the city she inquired as before after her beloved; *the watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me:* which may refer to the true ministers of God, who sometimes are too severe in their upbraidings, and harsh in their censures, and with the terrors of the law wound those who need the healing of the gospel. Or rather false teachers are intended, who persecute and afflict the true members of Christ, and with pernicious errors and heresies rend the peace of the church. *The keepers of the walls took away my veil from me:* they, who by office and profession should have been her comforters, expose her to shame, and do her the greatest injury; enemies often both to the doctrines and practice of true godliness, and most effectually undermining the interests of the church, which they pretend to serve. The treacherous watchmen of Zion have ever done her greater injuries than her most avowed enemies.

8. She earnestly beseeches the daughters of Jerusalem to befriend her. *I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, or adjure you:* charges them on oath, which intimates her own eagerness and fervent affection; *if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love.* The absence of Jesus is insupportable to truly penitent souls; and as the fainting hart thirsteth for the water-brooks, so eager are their longings after him their Saviour.

3dly, In answer to the charge given,

1. The

## CHAP. VI.

In this chapter, (1.) The daughters of Jerusalem, moved with the description which the church had given of Christ, inquire after him, ver. 1. (2.) The church directs them where they may meet with him, ver. 2, 3. (3.) Christ is now found of those that sought him, and very highly applauds the beauty of his spouse, as one extremely smitten with it, ver. 4—7. preferring her before all others, ver. 8, 9. and recommending her to the love and esteem of all her neighbours, ver. 10. And lastly, acknowledging the impressions which her beauty had made upon him, and the great delight he took in it, ver. 11—13.

[Before Christ 1014.]

**W**HITHER is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither

is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee.

2 My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.

3 I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.

4 ¶ Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners.

5 Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me: thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gillead.

1. The daughters of Jerusalem inquire after the description of the person whom the church so earnestly sought. *What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women?* Such is the title they give her, and most deserving of it she appears; for no beauty is like the beauty of holiness, wherein the saints are arrayed; and the image of Jesus, stamped on all his living members, makes them glorious in the eyes of God and all good men. *What is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?* which some take as a slighting question, as if he, whom she seemed so distressed about, was scarcely worthy such concern; and then these daughters of Jerusalem must be the formal professors, who are strangers to the warmth of a zealous heart; and, having never known the excellencies of the Lord Jesus themselves, wonder at, or deride, the eagerness and solicitude which others shew in seeking him. But it may also be the serious inquiry of young converts, desiring themselves to be more acquainted with Christ, his person, and offices, that they might know him better, and love him with more enlarged affection.

2. She launches out into a description of his excellencies, in images borrowed from the human form. *My beloved is white and ruddy*, the lily and rose unite in him; not so much respecting his human form while he abode upon earth in the flesh; but, as God incarnate, to save sinners he was full of grace and truth, fairer than the children of men, in the unfulfilled purity of the human nature, and infinitely exalted above them in the glory of the divine: *the chiefest among ten thousand*, nor earth beneath, nor heaven above, affords his fellow, neither angels nor men are to be compared with him; or *a standard-bearer over ten thousand*, under his banners his faithful people are collected, ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, and he exalted above them all, as an ensign on a hill. *His head is as the most fine gold*, which may refer to his divine nature, which gave value to all the sufferings of the humanity; or may signify his sovereign dominion and authority over his church, and the powerful influences that each member derives from him their glorious head: *his locks are bushy, and black as a raven*; the faithful, who spring from him, are thus numerous and beautiful; or it expresses his eternal youth, the same yesterday, to-day, and

for ever. *His eyes are as the eyes of doves*, sharp-sighted, yea, all-seeing, withal full of gentleness and love, looking with tenderest sympathy on his poor afflicted people; *by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set*, appearing in their greatest beauty: *his cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers*, when manifesting his presence in the midst of his people, and shedding abroad his love in their hearts, they enjoy delightful communion with him, and rejoice in the light of his countenance: *his lips are like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh*, pure are all his words, precious all his promises, inestimably fragrant the doctrines of his grace, which speak pardon, righteousness, and salvation to the souls of believers. *His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl*, all the works of his hands in providence and grace are exquisite, and to be admired: or his hands are full of the gifts of his munificence, the graces and consolations of his Spirit, which he liberally dispenses to all believers, whom, as a king, he is pleased to honour: *his belly is, or his bowels are, as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires*, which some understand of the human nature of Christ, as exalted by its union with the divine; others of that tenderness and pity, which lead him to yearn over the distressed of his saints. *His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold*; he is Almighty, to sustain the weight of the sins of a world, which are laid upon him; and of the government of his church and kingdom; and also to trample under foot all his enemies and theirs. *His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars*; majestic, exalted higher than the kings of the earth. *His mouth is most sweet, or sweetnesses*; the very essence of delight, when speaking in his gospel the great and precious promises, the most reviving news that ever greeted sinners' ears; or when sealing with the kisses of his love our pardon and peace. *Yea, he is altogether lovely*; description cannot paint his excellence; when fancy hath lavished all her stores, and imagination collected every beauty that the creatures ever yet possessed, the half of his glory is not told us.

3. She concludes with triumphant exultation in her beloved. *This is my beloved*; I love him; no wonder, since his beauty is so transcendent; *and this is my friend*, on whom I have placed all my dependence, whose kindness ten thousand times I have proved: know him therefore, love him, seek him, *O daughters of Jerusalem*.

CHAP.

6 Thy teeth *are* as a flock of sheep which go up from the washing, whereof every one beareth twins, and *there is* not one barren among them.

7 As a piece of a pomegranate *are* thy temples within thy locks.

8 There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number.

9 My dove, my undefiled, is *but* one; she is the *only* one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her. The daughters saw

her, and blessed her; *yea*, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.

10 ¶ Who is she *that* looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as *an army* with banners?

11 I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded.

12 Or ever I was aware, my soul made me *like* the chariots of Ammi-nadib.

13 Return, return, O Shulamite; return,

### CHAP. VI.

*Ver. 1. Whither is thy beloved gone*] This is the address of the virgins to the spouse; and, in the Vulgate, LXX, &c. is included in the former chapter.

*Ver. 4. Thou art beautiful—as Tirzah*] Tirzah was a beautiful situation in the tribe of Ephraim chosen by Jeroboam for his place of residence till he removed to Samaria. Its etymology in the Hebrew signifies a *delightful city*. *Comely or graceful as Jerusalem*, alludes to the known estimation in which Jerusalem stood. The Psalmist and Jeremiah call it, *the perfection of beauty*. Pf. l. 2. Lam. ii. 15. *Terrible as an army with banners*, might be rendered, *dazzling as bannered hosts*. This passage is finely illustrated by a modern poet:

Awfully gay, as glitt'ring hosts appear,  
Majestically sweet, and amiably severe.

See the New Translation.

*Ver. 5. Thy hair is a flock of goats*] See on chap. iv. 1. and the *Explication des Textes Difficiles*, p. 323.

*Ver. 9. My dove, my undefiled, &c.*] The author of the new version renders it thus, *But, my dove, my undefiled is but one*, (that is to say, stands alone in my affections;) *she is dear to me as an only child to her mother; as her darling to her that bare her. The maidens saw her, and blessed her, &c. and thus they praised her: ver. 10. Who is she, &c.?*

*Ver. 10. Who is she that looketh forth*] *Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, dazzling as all the starry hosts?* The gradation of images so naturally leads to the interpretation here given, that it seems impossible that the passage could have had any other meaning. A little attention to the original will abundantly shew the propriety of the meaning here assigned. See the New Translation, and Robertson's Thesaurus, p. 860, &c. —Here ends the fifth day's eclogue; wherein the church, having a taste of Christ's love, is sick of love, and gives a description of him by his graces. She professes her faith in him; and he in return sets forth the graces of the church in terms nearly similar to those made use of in the fourth chapter. It is generally thought by spiritual interpreters, that the description given, chap. v. 2—7, refers to that spiritual dulness which sometimes creeps upon too many believers. "Let us hence learn, (says Theodoret on this passage) "what mischiefs arise from spiritual sloth and laziness,

"and in what troubles and pains they engage us; for the spouse here excusing herself, and not being willing presently to rise to the bridegroom, is compelled a little while after, not only to rise, and run down to the door, but to run through the city, and wander about the streets, falling among the watchmen, and being entreated by them, and after all could scarcely find her beloved; to whom if she had hearkened immediately, and obeyed his heavenly call, she had avoided all these inconveniences." See Bishop Patrick, Bishop Hall, Calmet, Gill, and the Reflections. It shall now suffice to say here with the spouse, that *he is altogether lovely*; amiable in every perfection, and sufficient to attract the love of all mankind. I would just add, that in the description which the Bridegroom gives of the beauty of the church, the ninth verse is generally supposed to be expressive of the unity of the church. See, in particular, St. Cyprian, book iv. sect. 8, 12. and book v. sect. 1.

*Ver. 11. I went down into the garden of nuts*] The nut-tree is a plant which delights in a cold climate, and therefore must have been valued as a rare and curious exotic in Palestine. Josephus speaks of it as an uncommon proof of the fine temperature of the air, that this shrub flourished in Galilee near the lake of Gennethareth, together with plants of a warmer region. *The vine flourished*, would be rendered more exactly, *the vine budded forth*; and so in ver. 12. of the next chapter. See the New Translation, and Addison's Present State of the Jews.

*Ver. 12. Or ever I was aware, &c.*] *I knew [them] not: my heart set me upon the chariots of my swilling people.* Carpzov. *Crit. Sacr.* p. 904. See Aquila, and Symmachus. According to the common rendering, *chariots of Ammi-nadib*, is supposed to be a proverbial expression for chariots of an extraordinary swiftness. The author of the New Translation renders the verse thus; *I knew not the irresolution of my mind, which made me withdraw swift as the chariots of Ammi-nadib.*

*Ver. 13. Return, return, O Shulamite*] שולמית *Shulamith*. SHULAMITE is evidently formed from שלמה *shelomáh*, SOLOMON; as *Charlotte* from *Charles*, &c. and is equivalent to *wife* or *bride of Solomon*. This appellation is the more remarkable, as it was inconsistent with the Jewish customs to give the name of the husband to his wife. I have no doubt but there was a mystic meaning in the imposition

return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies.

position of this name; which might be, that as the Shulamite is held by some to have been a foreigner, and the favourite spouse of Solomon, the king, in marrying her, typified the true Prince of Peace, the Messiah, who was to espouse a church taken from the Gentiles, though strangers and foreigners with respect to the Jews. We may just observe, that the former part of this verse is assigned to the bridegroom's companions: then the virgins are supposed to ask, *What would, or, will you see in the Shulamite?* or, *what do you look for in the Shulamite?* when the bridemen answer, *As it were the conflict*, or perhaps more exactly, *the rushing together of two armies*; not in the way of battle, for that will not agree with the original word *מחלהת mecholath*, but in the way of a friendly or triumphant meeting; and may imply the exultation of the two chorusses of men and women on this occasion.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Struck with the description of the excellence of Jesus, which the spouse his church had given, the daughters of Jerusalem no longer wonder that she should so highly value him; their own hearts caught the sacred flame; and since here no rivalry awakens jealousy, they are resolved, with her, to seek him. Her discourse shewed the intimacy of her acquaintance with him, therefore they in their turn are solicitous to learn of her where he may be found. We have,

1. The question, *Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside, that we may seek him with thee?* Holy zeal is a spreading flame; they who delight to proclaim the glories of Christ, will find others charmed with his beauty, and ready to join in seeking him, in prayer, in his word, and in his other ordinances, and he will be found of all that call upon him faithfully.

2. The answer is given, *My beloved is gone down into his gardens.* The spouse had toiled in vain to seek him in the streets; in the noise and hurry of the world he is not to be found; she now remembers that he had gone down to his garden, his church, *to the beds of spices*, the several congregations of his saints, or the souls of his believing people filled with divine graces, where, well-pleased, he takes up his abode: *To feed in the gardens*, either his flocks in the green pastures of his ordinances, or himself with the pleasant fruits of holiness, which he with delight beholds growing up before him; *and to gather lilies*; to place his saints now in the bosom of his love, or at death to gather them into his everlasting arms.

3. She professes her confidence of an assured interest in him. *I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine*; she entertains not a doubt of his regard, and is conscious of the simplicity of her own heart before him. *He feedeth among the lilies*; there in the midst of his people she expected with delight to find him; nor was she disappointed of her hope. Note; (1.) That soul is truly happy which in faith and love can say, *My beloved is mine, and I am his.* (2.) When we can rest assured of our own unfeigned attachment of heart to Christ, we may safely conclude our sure interest in his regard.

VOL. III.

2dly, The gracious Lord no longer hides his face, nor delays to satisfy the desires of his believing people. He comes; grace is in his lips, and tenderness in his heart.

1. He admires her beauty: *Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah*, which was most pleasantly situated on a rising hill; *comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners*, to all her enemies, who must finally bow before her feet.

2. He expresses the delight that he took in her: *Turn away thine eyes from me*; he can no longer bear the earnestness, anguish, love, and tenderness, which speak in her looks. Or, *Turn thine eyes over against me*; the eyes of faith and affection; hang not down thy head with shame, but raise these downcast looks: all the past is forgiven and forgotten, return then unto thy rest again; *for they have overcome me*, brought me back again: or, *they have strengthened me*; it refreshed his heart to behold her penitent return: or, *lifted me up with joy*, so delighted was he with her love.

3. He gives the same description of her beauty which he had done before, chap. iv. 1—3. Though by her unfaithfulness it was sullied, and she might be fearful that Christ's love towards her would not return with equal ardour, he assures her of the recovery of his warm affection, and that she is again beautiful in his eye. Blessed be our dear Lord, he hateth putting away; and, though corruptions have prevailed to our defilement, yet the fountain of his blood is still open; and if we come to wash there, our souls shall then appear as the moon, fair as ever, when the cloud is passed away.

4. Her excellence is above all compare. By the *queens, concubines, and virgins*, some understand the world in general, from the highest in rank and station to the lowest; others, the false churches and deluded people; but rather it may mean believers in general, the most advanced in spiritual attainments, or the converts of lesser experience, who are afterwards said to *praise her*. Whatever amiable qualities may be in any individuals, the church in the aggregate possesses them all. *My dove, my undefiled, is but one*; dear to him above all others; *one body*, of which he is the living head. *She is the only one of her mother*; she is the choice one of her that bare her; more tenderly beloved than an only darling child. *The daughters saw her and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.* Either this signifies the high honour the church will receive in the latter day, see Isa. lx. 3—11. or the delight in her expressed by all the faithful, and their prayers for her prosperity.

5. They who praised her, burst forth into admiration at her beauty. *Who is she that looketh forth as the morning?* The image is taken from the light, and may be applied to the church, whose day began to dawn in the patriarchal age: *fair as the moon*, as increasing discoveries of the divine Messiah were reflected from the prophetic word: *clear as the sun*, when in the dispensation of the Gospel spiritual light and knowledge were in their full blaze diffused: *terrible as an army with banners*, going on conquering and to conquer, till all the powers of darkness shall be at last finally and eternally subdued. And this may be applied in particular to every faithful soul, to whom the light of truth

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at

## CHAP. VII.

In this chapter, (1.) Christ the royal bridegroom goes on to describe the beauties of his spouse, the church, in many instances, and to express his love to her, and the delight he has in her conversation, ver. 1—9. (2.) The spouse, the church, expresseth her great delight in him, and the desire that she had of communion and fellowship with him, ver. 10—13. Such mutual esteem and endearment is there between Christ and believers! And what is heaven but an everlasting interchanging of loves between the holy God and holy souls!

[Before Christ 1014]

**H**OW beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter! the joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands

of a cunning workman.

2 Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor: thy belly is like an heap of wheat set about with lilies.

3 Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins.

4 Thy neck is as a tower of ivory; thine eyes like the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Beth-rabbim: thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus.

5 Thine head upon thee is like Carmel,

at first, like the grey morning, is indistinct: as they advance in grace they shine with borrowed but increasing splendour derived from Christ; till at last they appear bright as the sun in the firmament of glory, and all their enemies, which in their militant state opposed them, shall for ever become their footstool.

3dly, The reconciliation being now complete, Christ gives his church an account whither he went, and how he was affected during his absence from her.

1. *I went down into the garden of nuts*: though his sensible and comforting presence was withheld, he was among the trees; to see the fruits of the valley, what graces of repentance would be exercised by his church; and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded; either the first movings of his Spirit quickening the hearts of new converts, or the risings of gracious repentance for the unfaithfulness which had caused him to hide his face, which he with delight observed.

2. He declares how strongly he felt his heart drawn forth towards her: *Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib*. He could refrain no longer; swift he flew to dry the tears of her penitence, and, with the sense of his presence and love, to comfort her disconsolate heart. Or, *My soul made me as chariots to my willing people*: since they began to seek him in prayer and faith, his heart is open for their reception, and he takes them up into his chariot of love. Some make these the words of the spouse, pleasingly surpris'd to find her Lord come down to visit her, and flying to meet him with rapid eagerness.

3. He invites her with affectionate importunity to return to him, and be happy. *Return, return, O Shulamite*: Christ, the greater than Solomon, communicates his name to his spouse the church; she is the *Shulamite*. *Ubi tu Caius, ibi ego Caia*. And lest, discouraged by her past conduct, she should be ashamed or afraid to meet him, he assures her of the kindest reception. Guilt makes the soul fearful, and bitter are the disquietudes which the awakened backslider experiences; but let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. *Return, return, that we may look upon thee*: Christ now taking pleasure in her, and all the saints and angels admiring her beauty, when presented without blame before him in love.

4. A short account is given of the Shulamite. *What*

*will ye see in the Shulamite?* which, considered as her own words, bespeaks her modesty and humility. Christ desired to look upon her, and she is not conscious of aught in herself worthy the least regard from him: *as it were the company of two armies*; a scene of warfare between her and her enemies without, or between grace and corruption within. Or this is the description that Christ gives of her: she is beautiful as two companies that go forth with music and dancing to convey the bride to her husband's house; or, as divided into two bands, the church militant on earth, and triumphant in heaven, and both glorious in holiness.

## CHAP. VII.

*Ver. 1. How beautiful are thy feet with shoes*] Instead of *shoes*, we might read more properly *sandals*. The word נָדִיב *nadib*, here rendered *prince*, is in Ps. xlvii. 9. and cvii. 40. used in the plural number to denote the Hebrew chiefs, or rulers of tribes: it is rendered, Isa. xiii. 2. by the word *nobles*.

*Ver. 2. An heap of wheat*] It was usual with the Jews, when their wheat had been threshed out and fanned, to lay it in heaps, Ruth, iii. 7. Haggai, ii. 16. and as their threshing-floors were in the open air, they stuck them round with thorns in order to keep off the cattle, Hosea, ii. 5, 6. These, as a mark of respect to the spouse, are here converted into a fence of *lilies*; or, we may suppose with Lamy, that Solomon here alludes to a custom which, according to him, they had in Palestine, of throwing flowers round the heaps of corn after it was winnowed. *Wheat and barley* were, among the ancient Hebrews, emblems of fertility; and it was usual for the standers-by to scatter these grains upon the new-married couple, accompanying it with a wish that they might increase and multiply. The passage in the text is therefore a prediction of the glorious fertility of the church of Christ. The next verse should be rendered as in ch. iv. 5. See the New Translation, and Selden, Uxor. Heb. lib. ii. c. 15.

*Ver. 4. Thine eyes like the fish-pools*] The author of the New Translation gives us a true idea of the simile here used: *Thine eyes are clear and serene as the pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Beth-rabbim* [which was one of the gates of Heshbon].

*Ver. 5. Thine head upon thee, &c.*] *Thine head upon thee riseth eminent and majestic, like Carmel, and the tresses of thy*



and the hair of thine head like purple; the king is held in the galleries.

6 How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!

7 This thy stature is like to a palm-tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes.

8 I said, I will go up to the palm-tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof: now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, and the smell of thy nose like apples;

9 And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep

to speak.

10 ¶ I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.

11 Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages.

12 Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, *whether* the tender grape appear, *and* the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves.

13 The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, *which* I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.

*thy head thine like scarlet.* Michaelis, however, thinks that the word rendered *purple*, does not here signify the purple colour, but the *murex*, or Tyrian shell-fish, which produces that colour. Houbigant renders the whole passage, *The tresses of thy hair are like the royal purple, which hangs in festoons from the ceiling.* See New Translation.

*Ver. 7. Clusters of grapes.]* Dates are the fruit of the palm-tree. They grow in clusters, and should be read here instead of *grapes*. See Brown's Observations, and the New Translation.

*Ver. 10. His desire is toward me.]* Is fixed upon me. New Translation. See ch. ii. 16. vi. 3.

*Ver. 13. The mandrakes give a smell.]* The New Translation renders it in general, *The finest flowers give their fragrance.* See Gen. xxx. 14. The next clause may be rendered, *And in our boards are all kinds of delicious fruits, new gathered, as well as old.* The gates in Judæa were usually large buildings, and we may suppose the repository for fruits was either over them, or near them. Houbigant would read it, *And amongst our golden apples (or citrons) are many sweet ones, as well new as old;* that is to say, vernal and autumnal. Sanctius supposes that the passage relates to the custom in Palestine of decking the gates of newly-married persons with festoons of fruits and flowers.

*Are all manner of pleasant fruits.]* Dr. Russell tells us, as I have intimated above, that the English at Aleppo generally live at the gardens near Baballa during the month of April and part of May. Now I would observe (viewing the words at present in their literal sense), that if the sacred writer refers to such a sort of retirement in the close of this chapter, I doubt the word *fruits* should not have been introduced here. The original word מִגְדִּים *megadim*, apparently signifies *precious things*, of a very different kind from the fruits of a garden, in Gen. xxiv. 10. 2 Chron. xxi. 3. Ezra, i. 6. but they cannot be things of the nature of those referred to there, which are here meant, as appears from the invitation to go into the *field* or *villages* to enjoy them. If then they be neither fruits, nor jewels of gold, which are here meant, why may we not understand the word as signifying *precious plants* in general; herbs and flowers, *shrubs* and *trees*? Thus the *new and old megadim* that were treasured up, will signify, a delightful mixture of *new* plants with those desirable ones which had been accustomed to grow in the gardens of Judæa. Great

additions of precious flowers, shrubs, and trees, have been made to the gardens of Europe. Exotic plants also have been introduced into those of the East. Russell tells us, that the ladies of Aleppo are very fond of several European flowers which have been introduced into their gardens: and we learn from Maillet, that a bathaw of Egypt took great pains to preserve the balm of Matarchah. Cambyfes carried the peach into Egypt; and it is thought to be past doubt, that the cassia, the orange and lemon kind, apricots, *mosch*, (a delicious fruit, but which cannot be kept,) the pomegranate, and the *cons* or cream-tree, are none of them natives of that country. And can it be imagined then, that when novelties have been in all ages introduced into gardens, and that in the east as well as the west, there should not be *many such* in the days of a prince, who not only planted trees of all kinds of fruit for pleasure, (Eccles. ii. 5.) but who also distinguished himself by the study of natural history, and of vegetables in particular? 1 Kings, iv. 33. What is more, Josephus expressly tells us, there was a tradition, that the balsam for which Judæa was so celebrated, came from the queen of Sheba, who presented a root of it to Solomon. Antiq. lib. viii. c. 6. *At our gates*, or, as it is elsewhere translated, *at our doors*; at hand that is, *will you there find all manner of precious plants.* The words, understood in this sense, are by no means unnatural, especially if they be supposed to be those of the bridegroom. See the *Observations*, p. 410.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. A fresh commendation of the beauty of the church, addressed as a *prince's daughter*, begotten of the King eternal, and espoused to the Prince of the kings of the earth. She had in a great variety of expressions described the surpassing excellence of her Lord, and he now, rejoicing over her on her return to him, launches forth into her praise. From the beauty of the human form, some faint traces are collected of the infinitely surpassing beauty of the soul, by divine grace renewed, and made all glorious within. The similitudes here used represent to us,

(1.) The ministers of the church shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, and, with their feet beautiful on the mountains, hastening to proclaim the glad tidings of great joy.

(2.) The firm connection between the members of the body

## C H A P. VIII.

The affections between Christ and his spouse are as strong and lively here, in this closing chapter of the song, as ever, and rather more so. (1.) The spouse continues her importunity for a more intimate communion and fellowship with him, ver. 1—3. (2.) She charges the daughters of Jerusalem not to interrupt her communion with her beloved, ver. 4. and they thereupon admire her dependance on him, ver. 5. (3.) She begs of her beloved, whom she raiseth up by her prayers, ver. 5. that he would by his grace confirm that blessed union with him to which she was admitted, ver. 6, 7. (4.) She makes intercession for others also, that care might

be taken of them, ver. 8, 9. and pleaseth herself with the thoughts of her own interest in Christ, and his affection to her, ver. 10. (5.) She owns herself his tenant for a vineyard she held of him at Baal-hamon, ver. 11, 12. (6.) The song concludes with an interchanging of parting requests: Christ chargeth his spouse that she should often let him hear from her, ver. 13. And she begs of him that he would hasten his return to her, ver. 14.

[Before Christ 1014.]

**O** THAT thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! *when*

body mystical, who are knit together in love, strong by their mutual union, and readily moving in the paths of the divine commands.

(3.) The preachers of the word, full of divine truth, as a goblet crowned with wine, and strong to labour in the cause of God.

(4.) The fruitfulness of the church, teeming with precious seed, and beautiful to view as the hedge of lilies.

(5.) The rich consolations which are bestowed from the breasts of the word, where all the children of the church milk out, and are satisfied with the abundance of her glory, Isa. lx. 3.

(6.) The strength of faith, and purity of manners, which distinguish genuine and faithful Christians.

(7.) The depth and clearness of their understandings enlightened by divine grace; and the calmness of their tempers, unruffled as the surface of a standing pool.

(8.) Their sharp sagacity, and impregnable constancy.

(9.) Their glorious head, Christ Jesus; or their heavenly-mindedness, and elevation above the storms and tempests of this lower world.

(10.) The number and royal dignity of the faithful, who spring from their glorious Head, depend upon him, and are nourished by him.

2. Since she is so beautiful, Christ expresses his delight in her. *The king is held in the galleries*, well-pleased to take up his rest in the hearts of his people, and held by the strong cords of love to maintain abiding communion with them. *How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!* all her words and ways pleased him, and she was in his eyes altogether lovely; tall as *the palm tree*, and her breasts as *clusters of the vine*; straight in her walk and conversation, and fruitful in all good works that make glad the heart of God and man. *I said, I will go up to the palm-tree*, to solace himself in the shade, or to behold its flourishing state: *I will take hold of the boughs thereof*, to gather the fruit, or to prune the luxuriant branches by afflictions and crosses. *Now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine*, yielding the most grateful favour: *and the smell of thy nose like apples*; for Christ's presence draws forth the graces into lively exercise, and makes them give their sweet smell: *and the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved*; her gracious discourse being refreshing and pleasing to the ear, as wine to the taste, *that goeth down sweetly*: or *to righteousnesses*, leading and directing her in the ways of holiness; and by its reviving influence, *causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak*; as those who were faint, and their eyes closed, are recovered by a cordial draught; so the souls of those who slept in the death of

sin are recovered by the word and spirit of Christ; and believers who had felt a diminution of grace are revived and restored thereby.

2dly, The spouse,

1. Expresses her confidence in her Lord, and makes profession of her fidelity to him. *I am my beloved's*, wholly his, and not my own. Whatever excellencies I possess, they are derived from him; I have nothing which I have not received: *I am his*; I know, I am assured of it; for faith in lively exercise casteth out fear and doubt, and gives the soul the most assured certainty: *and his desire is toward me*; his affections are placed on his faithful people: for the whole world, but for their sakes especially, he came down from heaven, and loved not his life unto death, but underwent the bloody baptism, Luke, xii. 50. The company and converse of his church he is now pleased with; nor will he rest till the utmost desires of his soul are satisfied, and all his faithful people who perseveringly cleave to him, are brought to the enjoyment of his glory.

2. She invites him to come and give her the enjoyment of his presence: *Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field*. Wherever we are, we should desire Christ for our companion: if taking recreation, his presence will make the air doubly sweet: if engaged in the labours of the field, a sense of his nearness will beguile our toils, and make them easy. *Let us lodge in the villages*, retired from the noisy town, for solitude is the friend of contemplation; and they who would enjoy sweet communion with God must be often alone, speaking with him that seeth in secret. Or it intimates, that his presence can make the cottage a palace, and the place of meanest accommodations a dwelling of delight. *Let us get up early to the vineyards*; for those who have Christ with them must improve their opportunities, early seek him in their youth, early seek him every morning; for a slothful soul that dozes away the light of day, can never be in a flourishing state. *Let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth*; in what state the church and the several members of it are; whether our souls are putting forth the fresh blossoms of grace, and promising a plentiful vintage of every good word and work.

3. She promises to give him there her warmest affections: *There will I give thee my loves*; the desires of her soul being enlarged by his presence, and all her graces going forth in most lively exercise towards him. *The mandrakes give a smell*, (or, *the loveliest flowers*) which signify the fragrance of the graces of the saints, and their acceptableness to Christ: *and at our gates are all manner of pleasant*

I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised.

2 I would lead thee, *and* bring thee into my mother's house, *who* would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate.

3 His left hand *should be* under my head, and his right hand should embrace me.

4 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake *my* love, until he please.

5 Who *is* this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the apple-tree: there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth *that* bare thee.

6 ¶ Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as

a seal upon thine arm: for love *is* strong as death; jealousy *is* cruel as the grave: the coals thereof *are* coals of fire, *which* hath a most vehement flame.

7 Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.

8 ¶ We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts: what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?

9 If she *be* a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she *be* a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar.

10 I *am* a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favour.

*fant fruits, new and old*; the abounding works of faith and love; or the doctrines of the sacred Scriptures from which the ministers of the sanctuary, as from a storehouse, draw forth the richest provision for the soul; *which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved*; for though the provision be made for all who are called to partake of the advantages resulting from the oracles of God, and more especially for the members of his church, yet doth it ultimately tend to his glory. *Note*; All that we have is Christ's; it is a poor all indeed, and unworthy of his acceptance; but a gracious soul delights to lay it, such as it is, at his feet, and feels the deepest gratitude that he condescends to accept the service.

CHAP. VIII.

*Ver. 1. O that thou wert as my brother*] *O that thou wert as my infant brother, sucking my mother's breasts!* New Translation.

*Ver. 2. Who would instruct me*] literally, *Thou shouldst be constantly with me*: so Houbigant. The next clause refers to the Hebrew custom of mixing aromatic drugs with their wine. Russel in one place observes, that there are three sorts of pomegranates at Aleppo, the four, the sweet, and another betwixt both; and in another place, that they are wont to give a graceful acidity to their sauces by pomegranate or lemon-juice. Liquors of the kind above mentioned, leaving out the wine, which the Mahomedan religion forbids, are very common in the East to this day. See *Observations*, p. 193.

*Ver. 4. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, &c.*] We have in this day's eclogue a further account of the love of Christ towards his church; as well as a description of the church's graces. The church professes her faith and longing desire after Christ, together with the satisfactions of his love to her. In the 11th verse the heavenly Bridegroom expresses his desire and expectation of fruit proportionable to his care of the church, and kindness to her. In chap.

vii. 1—9. the particular graces, beauties, and excellencies of spiritual and divine communications are set forth: while the church expresses her wish in the 11th and 12th verses, to go forth and plant the gospel in the distant places and most remote corners of the earth; for which purpose, the *boards of pleasant fruits new and old*, that is to say, the knowledge and treasures of the oracles of God, are spoken of and adapted; and perhaps our Lord himself, who delighted to refer to the written word, may have in some degree alluded to these words, when he speaks of a *wife scribe, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old*. Matt. xiii. 52. Ravished with the prospect of the blessings of his love, the church declares her affection, chap. viii. 1—4. and professes that she feels the communication of his Spirit, which is the greatest token of his love, and which then works most strongly in our hearts, when he sees them fullest of affection to him.

*Ver. 5. Who is this that cometh up, &c.?*] The seventh and last day's eclogue begins here.

*Ver. 6. Set me as a seal upon thine heart, &c.*] See Exod. xiii. 9. The meaning is, "Place me so that I may never slip out of thy memory or affection. This request I make out of fervent love, which is strong or irresistible as death; especially when heightened by jealousy, or a fear of losing the beloved object." *The coals thereof are coals of fire*; or, as Dr. Hammond has excellently illustrated the place, *The darts or arrows thereof are darts of fire, of a most vehement flame*. The metaphor is taken from an arrow shot out of a bow, which by the swiftness of its motion takes fire; or rather, perhaps, alludes to the fiery arrows which were sometimes made use of for the same purpose as fire-balls among us. The LXX countenance this version by rendering the passage, *The feathers or wings thereof are wings of fire*. See Hammond on Psal. lxxvi. 3. the New Translation, and Martin's *Explication des Textes Difficiles*, p. 325.

*Ver. 9. If she be a wall, &c.*] *If she be a wall, we will build*

11 Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon ; he let out the vineyard unto keepers ; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand *pieces* of silver.

12 My vineyard, which *is* mine, *is* before me : thou, O Solomon, *must have* a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two

hundred.

13 Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice : cause me to hear *it*.

14 ¶ Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.

*build upon her two silver towers.* The meaning of the passage is, " We will take care of her in proportion as she is " capable of receiving or profiting by our bounty, like as " men are accustomed to build upon good foundations." The orientals delight thus to express themselves by parables or comparisons.

*Ver. 12. My vineyard, which is mine.] My vineyard which before brought me in a thousand pieces, is now thine, O Solomon ; and there are two hundred pieces for those who look after the fruit thereof.* By *pieces of silver* here are understood *shekels*, supposed to be in value about two shillings and four pence halfpenny each.

*Ver. 14. The mountains of spices.] That is, the mountains where spices grow ; such as those mentioned, chap. iv. 6. and chap. ii. 17. and some have thought that it should be rendered here, as in the last place, the mountains of בְּשָׁמִים *Besamim*. What these mountains were we are now ignorant, though it is certain that the creatures here mentioned were bred in the highest mountains of the country : as *Ælian* testifies in the latter end of his fifth book : " The harts in Syria are bred in their highest " mountains, Amanus, Libanus, and Carmel." Spiritually we have in this eclogue the vehemency of divine love set forth, the calling of the Gentiles, and in the last verse a prayer for the coming of Christ. The calling of the Gentiles is foretold in the eighth verse, though some suppose that it refers to the properties of divine love, described in the preceding verse ; one of which is, a solicitude for those who are devoid of this love, or who have but the beginning of it. The words may also be applied (says a writer) to a soul or a church in a state of imperfection ; but built upon Christ, the foundation ; and then the ninth verse may be thus paraphrased, " Let her be but firm and constant like a wall in her love to me, and I will not " abandon the care of her. Let her but exclude all other, " and admit me alone, and she shall never want any thing " necessary to her perfection ; for I will richly adorn her, " and make her like the house of God himself, which is " lined with cedar : " and then the 10th verse may be thus applied, as her answer : " I am resolved to do what " thou requirest, to be steadfast and faithful, and I already " perceive the reward of my fidelity ; in consequence of " which, I will consecrate myself, and all my powers, the " cultivation and improvement of all my talents, to the " service of my heavenly bridegroom," ver. 11, 12. The last verse concludes this song as it began, with a desire that the Messiah would come and make good all those things which had been represented in these divine raptures.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. The desire of the spouse after the most endearing intimacy and communion with her Lord : *O that thou wert as my brother*, with whom she might indulge a holy familiarity, and from whom she might find the warmest regard and succour under all her afflictions and infirmities ; *that sucked the breasts of my mother* ; which may refer to the incarnation of Christ, who became a babe at the breast, and partaker of the same flesh and blood with us ; and therefore from him we may hope for the tenderest sympathy and affection.

2. She professes what she would do in this case. *When I should find thee without, or in the streets*, in the public ordinances, *I would kiss thee* ; make open professions of her love and attachment to him : *yea, I should not be despised*, for such marks of affection which to a brother were becoming, and which Jesus would not disdain, but receive with pleasure. *I would lead thee with delight to my mother's house*, the place of the assembly of God's children, *who would instruct me* how to behave aright towards thee ; or, *there thou wouldst instruct me*, and teach me how to walk and to please God. *Note* ; True wisdom cometh from Jesus alone ; without his divine teaching, we can know nothing as we ought to know. *I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate*, the lively exercise of grace, and her diligence in his service, more pleasing to him than the most delicious juice of the grape or pomegranate. *His left hand should be under my head. and his right hand should embrace me* ; comforting me with the most endearing expressions of his love, and supporting me with his almighty power.

3. She gives a charge to the daughters of Jerusalem, a. before, not to interrupt her communion with her beloved. *I charge you, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love until he please.* *Note* ; They who know the blessing of Christ's presence, will be careful themselves, and mindful to caution others not to grieve the Saviour, or by any unfaithful and displeasing conduct to provoke him to depart.

2dly, The daughters of Jerusalem are represented,

1. As breaking forth into admiration on beholding the spouse. *Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved ?* dependent on him, and sweetly supported by him. And it may represent the church in general, driven into the wilderness during the times of persecution, but through the power of Jesus at last triumphant : or the case of every particular believer, who is by nature found in the wilderness of sin, far from God, the ways of truth, and the road to glory ; but invited by the grace of Jesus, and by his arm supported : faith perseveringly resting upon him,

him, we are enabled to go up, travelling in the greatness of his strength, till we come to the eternal rest which remaineth for the people of God.

2. The spouse relates her own experience. *I raised thee up under the apple-tree.* The words are addressed to Jesus, who, when he seemed asleep, and to disregard his people's distresses, hath by prayer been raised up to stretch out his arm and come and help them. *There thy mother brought thee forth, there she brought thee forth that bare thee:* in the ministry of the word souls are brought forth, and Christ formed in the heart. This is compared to a woman travailing in birth, the pangs of repentance being frequently most acute and painful, and followed with joy and peace in believing.

3. She begs for an abiding interest in his regard, and a happy assurance of it. *Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm.* The allusion is to the high-priest's breast-plate, or to bracelets worn with the name, the hair, or the picture of any beloved object; and intimates the desire of the true believer to have a sure place in the heart of Jesus, a constant sense of his nearness, a lively experience of his love, and the abiding supports of his grace. To urge her suit, she pleads her vehement affection; *for love is stronger as death.* As it brought Jesus to the death of the cross for us, so, if need be, will it engage the faithful to lay down their lives for him. It will make us dead to the world, and to every object, compared with his blessed self: it will engage us to live for him, and make us happy to die and go to him. *Jealousy is cruel as the grave,* and will not admit a rival to Jesus in the heart. *The coals thereof are coals of fire,* which have a most vehement flame, burning with resistless fury, consuming the dross of base affections, and ascending in circling volumes to the skies. *Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.* It burns the fiercer by opposition, and rises fairer and stronger from the waters of persecution. *If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be condemned.* Offer a faithful soul ten thousand worlds in exchange for the love of Jesus, —she would count them all dung and loss. Or it intimates the freedom, as well as riches of the grace of Christ, which, though inestimable, he bestows on his people without money and without price.

3dly, This loving pair, now united in the bonds of heavenly love, are represented as consulting together about their affairs. Husband and wife must consult together; this is a part of the mutual comfort of that endearing relation, for two are better than one.

1. The spouse proposes a case for her beloved's advice: *We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts,* which may be interpreted of the Gentile church, a sister to the Jewish church, but little, younger in years, and *having no breasts;* not grown up to a woman's estate, destitute of ministers, ordinances, and the word; and, as a little child, ignorant and foolish; *what shall we do for our sister, in the day when she shall be spoken for?* when the Gentiles should be called into the fellowship of the Gospel, to enjoy that high dispensation, or *spoken against* by the unbelieving Jews or heathens, loaded with reproaches, and urged to desert the faith of Christ.

2. He answers, *if she be a wall,* raised on the foundation

of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone, *we will build upon her a palace of silver.* *We;* for though the power is Christ's alone, he is pleased to employ ministers as workers together with him; and the work of grace is well compared to a silver palace, to denote the excellency of the soul, made *the habitation of God through the Spirit.* *And if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar.* As soon as ever the door is open for the preaching of the Gospel among the Gentiles, they shall grow up into a glorious temple.

3. It is no sooner spoken than done. *I am a wall, and my breasts like towers,* which are the words of the Gentile church. What Jesus hath promised, is spoken of as already done: she is built upon him the foundation, and strengthened by his grace. *Then was I in his eyes as one that found favour;* affectionately regarded of Christ, and favoured with all the privileges and blessings of the Christian church.

4. The Gentile church describes the progress of the Gospel, and Christ's glory therein manifested. *Solomon, the Prince of peace, the Lord Jesus, had a vineyard, a church, at Baal-hamon, in the Gentile world, consisting of many nations: he let out the vineyard unto keepers, the ministers of the sanctuary, whose business and office it is to dress and keep it, See Matt. xxi. 33. Every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.* He expects to receive fruit from their labours, and to see multitudes of immortal souls gained by their ministry, which will be as much to their account as to his glory.

5. The church expresses her concern for all her members. *My vineyard, which is mine, is before me;* every plant requiring constant care, and every believing soul watching with jealousy over herself, lest any noxious weeds growing up should choak the fruits of righteousness. *Thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand;* for since all our increase cometh from him, most justly ought we to render to him the praise of what his grace hath wrought; *and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.* They who labour in the gospel shall be abundantly gainers thereby: the souls that are presented to Christ as the fruit of their ministry, shall be their own joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of his appearing, *when they who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars in the firmament for ever and ever.*

4thly, Though for a moment they are parting, Christ and his church express their mutual regard, and look for their future happy meeting.

1. Christ at parting expects often to hear of her and from her. *Thou that dwellest in the gardens,* here below, enjoying the ordinances and means of grace; *the companions hearken to thy voice;* sweet intercourse and communion being maintained between the faithful, and all of them paying the most attentive regard to the ministry of the word. *Cause me to hear it,* ascending in prayer and praise, in bold and open professions of her faith before the world, and in zealous endeavours to spread the knowledge of his grace among men. *Note;* When Christ courts us to come to him, and declares himself so willing to hear, shall we be backward to go? No, Lord, *early in the morning will I direct my prayer to thee, and look up.*

2. The church desires his speedy return. He is gone away

away for a while to heaven, on her account, to be her friend and advocate before the throne of God, to prepare eternal mansions of glory for her reception; and she begs him to hasten back, and take her to himself, that where he is, she may be also. *Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.* Christ is now set down on the mountain of spices, the throne of glory: there the eye of faith beholds him, and there love still embraces him. With eagerness his waiting servants expect him; and, while they enjoy the bright gleams of his reconciled countenance here below in sweet

communion with him, their souls the more importunately pray for his appearing, that they may see him face to face. Nor shall the time be long delayed; swift are the rapid hours hurrying by; time draws to its period; eternity approaches; the Lord is at hand: blessed and happy are they who in that day can welcome his arrival, and, when he once more bows the heavens, and comes down, in the assured confidence of his love can meet him, and cry, *Come quickly, Lord Jesus!* Reader, may this be thy happy case, Amen!

THE BOOK  
OF THE  
PROPHET ISAIAH.

*THE son of Amoz, the first of the four great prophets, was, as it is said, of the royal family; his father being, as is supposed, the son of king Joash, and brother to Amaziab, king of Judah. The beginning of Isaiab's prophecies we date, says Calmet, immediately from the death of Uzziab; and the death of this prophet we place in the reign of Manasseh, who began to reign in the year of the world 3306. before Jesus Christ 694. before the Vulgar Æra 698. The great and principal objects of Isaiab's prophecies are, the captivity of Babylon, the return of the Jews from this captivity, and the reign of the Messiah: For this reason, the sacred writers of the New Testament have cited him more than any other prophet; and the fathers say, that he is rather an evangelist than a prophet. Dr. Taylor thinks, that the first chapter, "by reason of the grand exordium, might be judged proper to stand at the front of the book; but it gives such an account of the distressed and desolate state of the land of Judah, as agrees much better with the wicked and afflicted reign of the apostate Abaz, than with the flourishing circumstances of the country in the reigns of Uzziab, and of his son and successor Jotham; who were both, in the main, good princes. Compare chap. i. 7—9. with 2 Chron. xxvi. 1—16. and the whole 27th chapter. But the 2d, 3d, 4th, and 5th chapters of this prophecy describe, and exactly correspond to, a state of national wealth and prosperity, which are usually attended with pride, arrogance, and luxury: Therefore I take this to be the order of those chapters. In the 6th chapter the prophet, in the council of God, received his commission, and soon after delivered the contents of the 2d, 3d, 4th, and 5th chapters; and these chapters contain all that remains of his prophecies in the reigns of Uzziab and Jotham, for the space of about sixteen years, till the first year of king Abaz." See Taylor's Scripture Divinity, p. 326. I shall principally follow, in my observations on this book, the divisions and analysis of Vitranga. It is the constant tradition both of Jews and Christians, that Isaiab was put to death with a saw at the beginning of the reign of Manasseh; to which the apostle is generally thought to have respect, Heb. xi. 37. Isaiab is justly esteemed the most eloquent of all the prophets. Grotius compares him with Demosthenes: In the prophet we meet with all the purity of the Hebrew tongue, as in the orator all the delicacy of the Attic taste. Both are sublime and magnificent in their style, vehement in their emotions, copious in their figures, and very impetuous when they set off things of an enormous nature, or which are grievous and odious. Whatever of its ancient sweetness and sublimity the Hebrew poetry preserves, it is all to be found in this exquisite book. The author of Ecclesiasticus says, that "Isaiab was great and faithful in his vision: In his time the sun went backward, and he lengthened the king's life: he saw by an excellent spirit what should come to pass at the last, and he comforted them that mourned in Sion; he shewed what should come to pass for ever, and secret things ere ever they came." Ecclus. xlviii. 22, &c. See Calmet and Bishop Lowth's 21st Prelection.*

## CHAP. I.

*Isaiab complaineth of Judah for her rebellion: he lamenteth her judgments: he upbraideth her whole service: he exhorteth to repentance, with promises and threatenings. Bewailing her wickedness, he denounceth God's judgments: he promiseth grace, and threateneth destruction to the wicked.*

[Before Christ 760.]

**T**HE vision of Isaiab the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the LORD hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.

3 The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know,

my people doth not consider.

4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward!

5 ¶ Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

6 From the sole of the foot even unto the head *there is* no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.

7 Your country *is* desolate, your cities *are* burned with fire; your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and *it is* desolate, as overthrown by strangers.

## CHAP. I.

*Ver. 1. The vision of Isaiab, &c.]* I divide the book of Isaiab, says Vitringa, into the title prefixed to the book, and the matter contained in it. The matter is twofold, prophetic and historical, which are interwoven together. The *prophetic* is divided into five parts; the first of which, from the 1st chapter to the 13th contains five prophetic sermons or harangues, immediately directed to the Jews, and also to the Ephraimites; whom the prophet variously reproveth, exhorts, and consoles. The second part, from the 13th to the 24th chapter, contains eight sermons, in which the fate of other nations is declared; Babylonians, Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, Egyptians, Tyrians, and others. The third part, from the 24th to the 36th, explains the penal judgments denounced by God upon the disobedient Jews and enemies of the church, with the most ample promises given to the true church; and is comprehended in three sermons. The fourth part, from the 40th chapter to the 49th, sets forth in four sermons, of a consolatory kind, the manifestation of the Messiah in the flesh, with its circumstances and effects, and the signs preceding it; particularly the deliverance of the Jewish church from their exile in Babylon. The fifth part exhibits, in five sermons, from the 49th chapter, the fate and events of Jesus Christ, his person and kingdom; with which this most noble prophecy closes. The *historical* part relates some notable events of those times, in which God was pleased to make use of the ministry of Isaiab, and, beginning with the 36th, ends with the 39th chapter. Vitringa reads the verse, *The prophecy of Isaiab—whom he prophesied, &c.* Vitringa also remarks, that the word *Isaiab* signifies *the salvation of Jehovah*; which he conceives to have been, in some degree, expressive of his office.

*Ver. 2. Hear, O heavens, &c.]* We have observed, that this first part of the book of Isaiab is comprehended in five sermons to the Jews; the first of which is contained in this chapter, the second in the chapters ii, iii, iv. the third

in chap. v. the fourth in chap. vi. the fifth in chap. vii—xii. The first sermon contains a judicial appeal, urged by the prophet in the name of God, against the Jews and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, as covenant-breakers and hypocrites; in which he sharply reproveth the vices of the Jewish church, and seriously exhorts them to true repentance, with a denunciation of the divine vengeance upon the obstinate and rebellious, and a promise of the blessings of grace with a restoration of their state to the true worship of their God. In the scene of this divine vision we may suppose God present, as the king of his people; the people as rebellious and revolting, summoned by him into court: the prophet, who discharges the offices of a herald, or cryer, summoning the witnesses and judges to attend, and of an orator pleading in a manly manner the cause of God, setting forth his justice and equity, admonishing the rebellious people of their duty, and, like a counsellor, persuading them to better things: and lastly, the witnesses, the heavens and earth, who are here represented as endowed with sense, and to whom the judgment of the whole cause is figuratively committed. See Deut. xxxii. 1. and Vitringa.

*Ver. 4. Children that are corrupters—have provoked, &c.]* Or, *Children that corrupt themselves—have contemptuously treated the Holy One of Israel; &c.*

*Ver. 5, 6. Why should ye be stricken, &c.* From the 4th to the 6th verse the prophet describes the mortal state of the people who had apostatized from God, and continued obstinate in that apostacy; and from thence to the 10th verse, their external or natural state. The metaphors here used are in themselves sufficiently clear, as is also their application in this view. Vitringa is of opinion, that the prophet here describes the state of the people under Ahaz.

*Ver. 7. Your country, &c.]* Or, *Your land is become a desolation: your cities are burned with fire; your ground strangers eat up before you; and the desolation is, as if it were destroyed by an inundation.* See Lowth.

*Ver.*



8 And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.

9 Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

10 ¶ Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom: give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.

11 To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats.

12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?

13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new-moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

14 Your new-moons and your appointed

feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me: I am weary to bear them.

15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

16 ¶ Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

17 Learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land;

20 But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

21 ¶ How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers.

Ver. 8. *A lodge in a garden of cucumbers, &c.*] See Job, xxxvii. 18.

Ver. 10. *Hear the word of the Lord, &c.*] The singular wickedness of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah was so enormous, that it was at last used as a proverbial expression, to convey the idea of the most black and incorrigible wickedness. The preceding words, which shew that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah could not now be addressed, because there were none left, shew likewise that it is the Jewish nation which is called by these names. This verse alludes to the song of Moses, Deut. xxxii. 32. and perhaps the prophet uses these allusions to shew that the times predicted in that song by the Jewish legislator were now come.

Ver. 11. *To what purpose, &c.*] This is a strong remonstrance against the hypocritical services of the Jews; very plainly declaring to them, that all external services, administered with a bad heart, so far from pleasing, are detestable to God. See Prov. xxi. 27. To whom, says Bishop Warburton, are these words addressed? to those who, besides their numerous irregularities, here reckoned up at large, delighted in groves and high places; for the denunciation is thus continued, *They shall be ashamed of the oaks, &c.* ver. 29. This shews that the Jews, notwithstanding their depravity, did not renounce their God when they descended to idolatry; but that their worst idolatry consisted in their mixing foreign worship with their own, or in worshipping the true God and idols together. God in these verses reproves the Jews respecting their sacrifices, their mere appearance before him, ver. 12. their gifts and

incense, ver. 13. their feasts and solemnities, ver. 13, 14. and their prayers, ver. 15. And in the 16th and 17th verses he counsels them what to do; namely, to repent, and do works meet for repentance; setting forth in the 18th and 19th the happy effects of following that counsel, and in the 20th the bad effects of neglecting it. At the 18th verse we have the most ample declaration of the divine placability upon sincere repentance. Vitringa thinks that the words may refer in some degree to the sanguinary crimes of the Jews. See the last clause of the 15th verse.

Ver. 17. *Relieve the oppressed*] Or, *Reform what is amiss.* Bochart.

Ver. 21. *How is the faithful city become an harlot*] Though the Lord, in the preceding part of the chapter, had suggested to the wicked and the hypocrites a method of returning to his favour, yet he foresaw that they would not hearken. He begins, therefore, afresh, (as if he repented of having indulged them so much, speaking after the manner of men,) to deplore their calamitous state, and to shew what this corrupt people were hereafter to expect. The first part of this new discourse contains a preface, from the 21st to the 24th verse, and a prediction of future events, from the 24th to the end of the chapter. In the preface the prophet complains, first, of the corruption of the whole city in general; which was become a harlot, violating her covenant, revolting from God by idolatry, or, what seems principally intended here, transgressing the laws of the covenant made with God; for, to violate the faith of the covenant, is, in the style of Scripture, to commence harlot.

22 Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water:

23 Thy princes *are* rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

24 Therefore saith the LORD, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah! I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies:

25 And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin:

26 And I will restore thy judges as at the

first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, The faithful city.

27 Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.

28 ¶ And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners *shall be* together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed.

29 For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen.

30 For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water.

31 And the strong shall be as tow, and

The 22d verse expresses metaphorically, what is expressed plainly at the latter end of the 21st and in the 23d verse; namely, that the princes, the judges, and chief men of the Jews, had declined from the paths of purity and integrity. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 24. Therefore, &c.]* Here begins the prediction of the events which should happen to this corrupt people. The *first* of these are, the evils to be inflicted by the Babylonish captivity; the *second* the purification of the church, ver. 25. the *third* the restoration of their government, ver. 26, 27. the *fourth* the salvation of the faithful by Christ, the end of the 26th and 27th verse: the *fifth* the final judgment of God upon the rebellious and disobedient to the Gospel, which shall follow the salvation of the true Israelites. The reader cannot but observe how sublime and full of majesty this passage is; in which the Lord of Hosts is represented as a mighty and generous hero, rousing up himself to punish, after he had a long time borne with patience the injuries unjustly offered him, and had solicited in vain his adversaries to their duty. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 25. Purely purge away thy dross]* See Deut. xxx. 2. 3. The meaning of these words is, that God would purge the remains of Israel in banishment from the dross and dregs of hypocrites and profane men, and would restore them, thus purged, to their land; the government being entirely renewed under just judges and senators, and prudent teachers. Some suppose that this refers to the times of Christ; but Vitringa is of opinion, that the *immediate* reference is to that renewal which happened directly after their punishment. Secondly, this whole passage may refer to the future and grand redemption through Christ.

*Ver. 29, 30. They shall be ashamed of the oaks, &c.]* The prophet here manifestly alludes to the ancient mode of idolatry in sacred groves and gardens, which consisted of tall, thick, and leafy trees, among which oaks were held in great honour from all antiquity. The 29th verse is remarkably elegant, where what was the pleasure and confidence of these idolaters, is made to denote their punishment. All the gardens in the east have water in them, which is so absolutely necessary, that without it every

thing in the summer would be parched up. This is a circumstance to which we should attend, if we would enter into the energy of the last clause, *As a garden that hath no water.* See *Observations*, p. 409. and Spencer, *de Leg. Heb.* lib. ii. c. 16.

*Ver. 31. And the maker of it as a spark]* The prophet had explained the judgment of God upon the finally disobedient, as it principally concerned their spiritual state; he now subjoins another explanation, which chiefly respects their corporal afflictions. The words are elegant; and the meaning of them is, that the rich, the powerful, the great (meant by the word *ḥāṣon*, which we render *strong*), who seemed like a lofty and well-rooted oak, shall perish, with their *works*; for their works, their great and wicked undertakings by which they had sought safety, like sparks, shall set them on fire, and consume them like tow. They shall perish, like fools, by their own devices. Nay, the very works themselves which they had raised with a proud spirit to the glory, preservation, and safety of themselves and their nation, shall afford an occasion for their destruction, and be turned into the very cause of it. The prophet here alludes, according to Vitringa, to the destruction of the state and temple by the Romans. The verse might be rendered, *And the powerful, or mighty one, shall be as tow, and his work as a spark.* Taylor would render it, *as a blaze*, whose effects upon tow would be certain, while that of a *spark* might be doubtful. See ch. i. 11. Malachi, iv. 1, &c. and Vitringa.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The first verse is a kind of title to the whole book. The author is Isaiah, or *the salvation of the Lord*: his father was Amoz, not Amos the prophet, but a different person, and of a different name. It is called his vision, as being delivered to him in this way; and, as he had himself a clear understanding of what he spoke, he delivered it very perspicuously to others. His ministry continued under four kings; but in what year of Uzziah he began his prophecies, or in which of Hezekiah he finished, is uncertain. Certain however it is, that he lived to see the best and worst of times, and under both proved himself alike faithful. They who live long may expect to see strange

the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.

strange alterations; happy if, with the prophet, they can in all states and conditions approve their unshaken fidelity to God!

2dly, Dark and dismal is the prospect with which the prophet opens his discourse.

1. He begins with an address to the heavens and the earth, as if turning from an incorrigible people deaf to reproof, to the inanimate creation; or appealing to the hosts above, and men in general, to record God's mercies and his people's impenitence.

2. He charges them with black ingratitude. *I have nourished and brought up children; or, I have magnified and exalted them; not only preserved them from their state of infancy, but distinguished them with peculiar marks of honour; and they rebelled against me; made him the basest requital for his mercy, rejecting his government, and apostatizing from his worship.* *Note;* (1.) Ingratitude is justly reckoned among the greatest crimes. (2.) As no kindnesses can equal those which God hath shewn to the sons of men in their creation and redemption; so can no ingratitude be so great and criminal as that of the impenitent sinner.

3. He upbraids them with the more than brutish stupidity of their conduct. The dull ox appears sensible of the hand which feeds him, and knoweth his owner's voice; and the very ass the crib in which he receives his food; but more stupid *Israel doth not know* or acknowledge the gracious care of God, or make the least suitable returns of love; *and my people doth not consider;* they pay no regard to the ordinances of God's service, and, wilfully obstinate, neither know nor desire to know him. *Note;* (1.) When men choose dissipation, and fly from every means which would lead them to consider their ways, they cannot but be led captive by the devil at his will. (2.) Many are in profession God's people, whose practice is utterly opposite thereto, and therefore their sins are highly aggravated. (3.) Negligence about God and our souls must necessarily end in ruin.

4. He dwells upon their wretched state, either as threatening them with the consequences of their sins or lamenting the evils that he foresaw. *Al, sinful nation! what will be thine end? How grievous the prospect! universal apostacy reigned; a people laden with iniquity, sinking under its heavy load and curse; a seed of evil doers, degenerated utterly from their pious ancestors: children that are corrupters, not content with being abandoned themselves, but doing the devil's work in turning tempters to others. They have forsaken the Lord, his ways and worship; they have provoked the holy of Israel unto anger, who is justly incensed at such rebellious conduct: they are gone away backward, vile apostates from their holy profession.* *Note;* When God comes to visit for sins, he will be minute; and every aggravation of them will be remembered.

5. They were incorrigible under every visitation, and their case, of course, was desperate. *Why should ye be stricken any more? when all the past visitations produced no gracious effects. Ye will revolt more and more;* become des-

perate and hardened by the corrections which should have led them to repentance. *The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint;* which may respect their sufferings, that, though reaching from the highest to the lowest, produced no reformation: or their sins which had so thoroughly infected priests and people, that, like a leper, from head to foot not a sound part was left; and, impenitently obstinate, none thought of repentance, or laboured to avert the heavy judgments under which they groaned. *Note;* (1.) We have here a lively picture of the corruption of the human heart, universally defiled by sin, loathsome before God, and incurably desperate for aught that man can do in his own strength to help himself. (2.) Afflictions, though a bitter portion, are the means which God often employs to awaken the sinner's conscience, and restore health to his soul. (3.) When sinners refuse to answer the gracious visitations of God, instead of being humbled by them, they grow more hardened. (4.) The case of that soul is desperate indeed, concerning which God saith, Let him alone.

6. He laments the desolations of Zion which were begun, or rather foretels what would be shortly her sad condition: *Your country is, or shall be, desolate;* ravaged by their enemies, their cities burnt, their land devoured by strangers, while they looked on, unable to prevent their ruin; their country a desert; the holy city and temple depopulated, deserted, despicable, ruinous, as the wretched hut which the keeper of the vineyard forsakes when the vintage is gathered; and the lodge, where the gardener watched till his fruit was safe, and then is overturned by the winter's blasts: or like a besieged city, from which escape is so difficult and dangerous, and which none care to approach. This was the case, 2 Chron. xxviii. 17—19. under Ahaz, during whose wicked reign it is supposed this prophecy was written: or it refers to the desolations which at first the Babylonians, and afterward, more dreadfully, the Romans brought upon them. *Note;* They who will not be warned, must endure the rod: whether it be a nation or individual, impenitence and perdition are inseparable.

7. A few, and but a few, still remained firm to God, amidst the general apostacy; and, but for these, utter extirpation must have ensued, dreadful as that which fell upon the devoted cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. The apostle quotes this as applicable to his own times, and descriptive of them, Rom. ix. 29. when, except the few who received the Gospel, the rest of the Jewish nation persisted in unbelief and hardness of heart. *Note;* (1.) It is a mercy that there have been a few faithful souls in the worst of times. (2.) The fewer they are, and the more wicked the days, the greater diligence should we give to be of that few. (3.) To go with the multitude is the sure way to hell. (4.) The more we reflect upon the wonders of grace, in plucking us as brands from the burning, the more should our hearts abound in love and praise.

3dly, We have,

1. An awful address to the rulers and people, to hear God's

## C H A P. II.

*Isaiah prophesieth the coming of Christ's kingdom. Wickedness is the cause of God's forsaking his people: he exhorteth to fear, because of the powerful effects of God's majesty.*

[Before Christ 760.]

**T**HE word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

God's word. He calls them rulers of Sodom, and people of Gomorrah, because, like them, they were *sinners before the Lord exceedingly*, Gen. xiii. 13. and magistrates, priests, and people, were sunk in the deluge of iniquity. Perhaps also he has reference here in the spirit of prophecy to the Gospel, which the Jewish people were called to receive; and, for rejecting which, it will be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom, than for them, Mat. xi. 24.

2. He rejects all their hypocritical services and sacrifices. Their most solemn assemblies, their feasts, sabbaths, incense, prayers, were an abomination. What purpose could they answer, when their hands were defiled with blood, and remaining pride, impenitence, and unbelief, made these outward ceremonies, however expensive, but a solemn mockery of God. This is especially applicable to the times of Christ, when with the greatest zeal the scribes and pharisees maintained the temple-worship, while they rejected him who was prefigured in these institutions, and exclusive of whom God never delighted in the most expensive sacrifices: and after having imbrued their hands in the Saviour's blood, though by his death an end was put to all the ritual services, yet they persisted in them, till God destroyed their city and temple together. *Note;* (1.) The greatest enemies to the power of godliness are often those who are the most rigid observers of the form. (2.) Whilst inward iniquity is harboured, and the heart continues estranged from God, the most liberal charities, or the largest gifts to God's altar, will be rejected with abhorrence. (3.) Many in a fright will be driven to their knees and their prayers, who are not driven from their sins, and therefore pray in vain. (4.) So far are all the outward services of religious worship from pleasing God, where the soul is unconverted and self-righteous, that he abhors the sabbaths and the solemn meeting; so that the very duties on which the formalists depend, will increase their damnation.

4thly, Since the ceremonial worship was declared ineffectual, the prophet directs them to the only sufficient means of acceptance with God.

1. By washing and making themselves clean, which all their ritual ablutions never could effect; and therefore they must come by faith under the sense of their guilt and pollution, to the fountain which should be opened in a Saviour's blood. *Note;* We might as soon think to wash the Ethiopian white, as to remove one spot of sin from our souls by any other method than through the atoning blood of Jesus.

2. As washed from their sins, they must amend their lives; putting away all known evil, making restitution for every act of injustice, and ceasing from sin. They must not merely rest in negative holiness, but exercise themselves

2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the

unto godliness in the practice of every good word and work, under the influence of divine grace, and with a single eye to the divine glory. And he instances wherein this course of well-doing consists, under the two great points of mercy and justice, which would please the Lord better than the most costly sacrifices. *Note;* (1.) Where the blood of Jesus cleanses from the guilt of sin, the Spirit of Jesus will deliver from the power of it; and in vain do they hope for the one, who continue strangers to the other. (2.) A Christian has no time to be idle; much has he to learn, much to do; and all his attention and care will be little enough for the great work which is before him.

3. He silences an objection which might be raised in the minds of those, whose deep views of past guilt might discourage them from returning to God, as if their sins were beyond pardon and hope. *Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool:* however great and aggravated their iniquities, they need not be discouraged: nay, are invited to come, yea, to come now, without delay, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though on the ground of their own deeds or duties they could not appear in any wise at God's bar, yet, when God put that prevailing argument in their mouths of the promises of full and free pardon through the blood and merits of a Redeemer, then they might come boldly to the throne, and fear no condemnation; the plea would be accepted, the sinner justified from all things. *Note;* That blood of Jesus which alone can cleanse from the least sin, as easily and effectually cleanses from the greatest: let no returning sinner despair.

4. He sets before them the blessing and the curse. *If ye be willing to submit to this advice, to wash and be clean; and obedient to the word and ways of God, ye shall eat the good of the land, the land of Canaan, in which their abode would be sure as long as their fidelity was maintained; and a better country than this also is the portion of the faithful servants of God. But if ye refuse to hearken to these admonitions, and rebel against the government and ministers of God, and against his incarnate Word the Messiah, then their ruin was determined; the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, the sentence is fixed and irrevocable; Ye shall be devoured with the sword of the Babylonians and Romans, executing upon them God's temporal judgments, and by the sword of eternal vengeance after death pursuing them to the lowest hell.* *Note;* (1.) If sinners perish, it will not be for want of warning; their blood will be upon their own heads. (2.) They who will not submit to God's sceptre, must suffer under his sword. (3.) When sinners persist in their rebellion, they reject their own mercies, and God's justice in their condemnation will be manifest to all.

4thly,

LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth

the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

4 And he shall judge among the nations,

5thly, As Jesus wept over the devoted city, the prophet, moved with a portion of his compassionate spirit, laments the wickedness that he beheld.

1. An awful change had passed on Jerusalem: the once faithful city is become an harlot, turning from the worship and service of God, and prostituting herself to all the abominations of iniquity. It was in past days famed for justice, full of judgment, her magistrates distinguished for integrity; righteousness lodged in it, as if chosen for her favoured abode. But how awful the contrast! *now the habitation of murderers*, who first massacred the prophets who witnessed of the just One, and then at last murdered the Son of God, Mat. xxiii. 37. Acts, vii. 52. Pure once, and bright as silver, dross now only remained; their practice corrupt, and their principles depraved. *Thy wine is mixed with water*; the lively oracles of God adulterated and debased by false glosses and human traditions; so that it was become of no effect. *Thy princes are rebellious*, ringleaders in sin; and companions of thieves, conniving at their crimes; and, for the protection they afforded, sharing of the fruits of their robberies. Gifts and bribes were their known delight, and ever carried the cause at their bar; while the poor, the fatherless, and widow, who had nothing to give, were suffered to be oppressed without redress; and such was exactly the character of the Jews in our Saviour's days. See Rom. ii. *Note*; (1.) Prostitution of justice for gain is more infamous than the prostitution of the harlot for hire. (2.) Injustice and bribery on the seat of judgment are a heavier curse on any people, than the ravages of the worst banditti: against the one we may guard, from the other there is no redress. (3.) We must not only abstain from injuring the poor; but we are criminal if we neglect to vindicate them from oppressors, and to espouse the cause of the afflicted. (4.) The former good examples of preceding magistrates, or illustrious progenitors, reflect double darkness on their degenerate successors.

2. God with indignation awakes to execute vengeance on his enemies. *Ab! I will ease me of them*, as a load under which the earth groaned: or, *I will take comfort of them*, pleased with the execution of righteous judgment upon them. And this he confirms by a recital of his glorious titles, *The Lord of Hosts, the mighty One of Israel*, able to fulfil all his denunciations, and before whom every foe must fall. Terrible was the execution of this threatening in their first destruction by the Babylonians; but most fearful, when, having rejected and murdered the Lord of life, he employed the Roman sword, and commanded that these his enemies, who would not that he should reign over them, should be slain before him.

3. A part will be recovered, converted, and saved; *I will turn my hand upon thee*, revive the decayed state of religion, purging their dross away in the furnace of affliction, and taking away the tin, the adulterations which they had mixed in their worship, and the corruptions of their practice; restoring their judges as at the first, and their

counsellors as at the beginning; and then they would recover their former credit and honour, as *the city of righteousness*, the faithful city, redeemed by judgment executed on their foes; and being now converted unto God, his righteousness became engaged for their recovery. And this was the case in a measure under Hezekiah's reformation, and may allude to their restoration from Babylon; but especially regards the day of Christ, when, by the powerful grace of God in the Gospel, such multitudes of Jews were converted; their sins, as dross, purged away; their self-righteousness, like tin, renounced, as false and base alloy. The apostles, as judges, were raised up to recover them from the worst enemies, sin and Satan, and to counsel and direct them in the way of truth and holiness. Being incorporated into Christ's church, they would become a praise in the earth, a people clothed with righteousness, and faithful to Christ, his Gospel and ordinances. His Zion is thus redeemed by the judgment executed on the divine Redeemer in her stead, and *her converts with righteousness*, in a way perfectly consistent with the holiness of God, whose righteousness eminently appears displayed in the salvation of the Gospel. *Note*; (1.) Every man by nature and practice is the slave of sin, that worst of slavery, till redeemed by grace. (2.) The Redeemer's sufferings unto the death of the cross are the great meritorious cause of our conversion; hereby God can be just, when he is the justifier of him that believeth on Jesus. (3.) When we recover the favour of God that we had forfeited, we shall be restored to the honour which we had lost.

4. The destruction of the enemies of Christ and his people is as sure as the salvation of the faithful. Their false confidence shall fail and confound them. Stripped as the oak in winter, they shall be left naked and bare, and withered as the garden that hath no water. The strong shall be as unable to resist, as the tow before the devouring fire; and *the maker of it*, the idol, or *his work*, all the devices of the transgressors, shall be as a spark of fire, and they shall burn together, and none shall quench them; which will eminently be fulfilled in the day of final recompense, when God shall execute judgment upon the ungodly; and the man of sin and all his followers, who have forsaken the ways of truth for lying vanities, human traditions, false doctrines and worship, and abominable idolatries, will have their portion together in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death, see Rev. xx. 10. 14.

## CHAP. II.

*Ver. 1. The word that Isaiah—saw*] The construction of the second sermon, which is comprehended in this, the third and fourth chapters, is excellent. It was the design of the prophet, or of the holy Spirit speaking by the prophet, to convince the Jews in this discourse of their neglect and contempt of the divine law, and their holy religion; and of their base propensity to profane and foreign superstitions; as also of other vices gaining ground among the people, while

and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

5 O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.

6 ¶ Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and *are* soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers.

7 Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither *is there any* end of their treasures; their

while the nation was yet in a flourishing state. To this purpose, while he seems in the beginning of his prophecy to treat of something quite different, he directs the exordium of his discourse with the greatest art to his intended subject. Rapt into a divine extacy, or vision, by the Spirit, a kind of school or celebrated academy is exhibited to him, over which Jehovah himself presided as ruler and teacher; which school is supposed to be founded on the top of mount Sion, raised aloft above all other mountains, that it might be seen, as it were, by the whole world. The prophet beholds many and great nations, after the fame of this feat of wisdom had spread itself every where, hastening to this celestial academy, and despising their ancient religions; drawing thence the precepts of salutary and evangelical doctrine, to be delivered at the end of time by the Messiah, the supreme teacher, and to be disseminated throughout the whole world; whose effect should be, the peace and concord of the people, and of those who embraced that faith. Thus far every thing was grateful, joyful, and consolatory to the minds of the pious; but observe how suddenly he changes his style: For when he seemed about to proceed in this pleasing and delightful discourse, and more fully to describe the felicity of those times, he stops, and, turning his discourse to God, by complaints of the unhappy state of the church in his time, he describes the manners of his contemporaries, who were cold to, and regardless of, the study of the divine law, and on the contrary warm and zealous for profane and foreign discipline; drawing, from this beautiful and consolatory vision, an argument to convince them of this and their other vices, and if possible to bring them back to duty from this comparison of future times. However, almost despairing of this, he places before their eyes that illustrious day of the divine judgment, when vengeance will be taken of the proud and idolatrous; repeating afterwards those crimes of theirs which would bring upon their nation the severity of divine wrath; yet softening the harshness of his discourse by a clear promise of the future Messiah, who should appear to the remains of them with all grace and an abundance of salutary blessings for the church. This discourse, besides the title and inscription, is threefold. Its *first* part comprehends the promise of some remarkable blessing in future times, when mount Sion, for the sake of true religion, shall be elevated far above all other places and schools in which religion is professed, together with the consequences of that benefit; from ver. 2 to 5. The *second* an exhortation of the people to repentance, with a bitter complaint of their corrupt state, and a denunciation of the divine judgments impending; from ver. 2. to chap. iv. 2. The *third* describes the flourishing state of the *remainder of the Jewish people*; which, under the care and the shade of the Branch of

Jehovah, the true Messiah, should rejoice in all the benefits of divine grace and true consolation, ver. 2. to the end. This prophecy, it is most probable, was delivered before the time of Ahaz, under Jotham; or, what is more likely, in the most flourishing state of the Jewish nation under Uzziah. It is thus to be literally applied; but no doubt has a farther spiritual and mystical interpretation. Vitringa.

Ver. 2. *And it shall come to pass*] We have in this period an august and fine image of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. It contains, *first*, a proposition of a certain admirable event in future time, in which the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be exalted above all mountains, and nations shall flow to it from all parts; ver. 2, 3. *Secondly*, A declaration of the cause of that conflux, the divine instruction delivered from this mountain;—end of the third verse. *Thirdly*, Its consequences; 1. The kingdom of Christ among the Gentiles by the word of the gospel. 2. The universal peace of the Gentiles; ver. 4. See Vitringa.

Ver. 5. *O house of Jacob, &c.*] The second part of this discourse contains an exhortation to the people to repent, with a complaint of their corrupt state, and a denunciation of the divine judgment: In which we have, *first*, a transition from one scene to the other, ver. 5. *Secondly*, a new scene is opened, and the present state of the Jewish people is described: ver. 6—9. *Thirdly*, The most severe penal judgment of God, to be inflicted upon these men at an appointed time, is set forth from ver. 9. to ver. 8. of chap. iii. *Fourthly*, this judgment of God is explained and justified, chap. iii. 8. to chap. iv. 2. The present verse is to be understood as an address of the prophet to the men of his time to turn from their evils, and apply themselves above all things to the study of the divine law, here meant by *the light of the Lord*, including also the light of the Spirit of God illuminating the Word.

Ver. 6. *Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people*] The prophet here begins his complaint of the present state of the Jewish nation; which contains, *First*, His proposition of its present state, as forsaken by God;—in this verse. *Secondly*, A demonstration of it from the vices which reigned in this nation; which were, a desire of foreign instructions; ver. 6. Pride and covetousness, ver. 7. Idolatry, ver. 8. The proposition is a kind of apostrophe, or complaint,—the prophet turning his discourse to God,—to teach, that God's forsaking them was a consequence of the vices reigning among them. Vitringa. It is well known how much sooth-saying prevailed in the east.

Ver. 7. *Their land also is full of silver, &c.*] In the original, this consists of a stanza of four verses, in which the construction of the two members is alternate; *their land is full*

land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots :

8 Their land also is full of idols ; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made :

9 And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself : therefore forgive them not.

10 ¶ Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty.

11 The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

12 For the day of the LORD of hosts shall

be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up ; and he shall be brought low :

13 And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan,

14 And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up,

15 And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall,

16 And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures.

17 And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low : and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

full of silver, answering to their land is full of horses ; as, neither is there any end of their treasures, does to neither is there any end of their chariots. The express orders of Moses against multiplying horses were intended to prevent the Israelites from having any commerce with Egypt, remarkable for its horses, and the source of idolatry : We therefore find, that when Solomon had opened a trade for horses, his kingdom likewise was therefore notorious for idolatry ; in allusion to which, the prophet here, after saying, there is no end of their chariots, adds, their land also is full of idols. See Deut. xvii. 16.

Ver. 9. And the mean man boweth down, &c.] And the mean man shall be brought down, and the great man shall be humbled ; and thou wilt not forgive them. Vitringa. This rendering is not only agreeable to the 11th and 17th verses of this chapter, and 15th of the fifth, but also to the scope of the argument ; for the prophet begins here to describe the imminent severe judgment of God, wherewith he would punish the pride of these men, and their alienation from the true worship of God and the study of the divine law. This part of his discourse contains, first, a general proposition of the immediate judgment of God,—in this verse. Secondly, a declaration of it ; ver. 10—22. with an exhortation adjoined agreeable to his discourse : ver. 22. Thirdly, a more special confirmation and elucidation of this judgment ; from ver. 1. chap. iii. to ver. 8. The particle *vau*, rendered *and*, in the beginning of the present verse, often retains the signification of the future ; and might here be rendered *then* or *now*. See Vitringa and Noldius.

Ver. 10. Enter into the rock] The prophet's discourse is here most sublime, in order to fill the mind with the highest ideas of the divine judgment impending. We have a preface concerning the greatness of this judgment, ver. 10, 11. a more clear exposition of it with respect to the subjects to be humbled by God, with the consequences of it ; ver. 12—21. and an admonition is subjoined at the end, ver. 22. The preface is figurative ; and its aim is, to teach, that in the revelation of God's judgments against the wicked, there will be the brightest display of the divine majesty

and glory, which scarcely any mortal will be able to sustain ; much less the impious and idolaters, the condemners of God and his law. He therefore exhorts them to hide themselves in the rocks and caves, that they might not be consumed by the fire of the divine majesty. The emblem is elegant, and seems to me to be taken from the circumstances in the history of Moses and Elijah, mentioned Exod. xxxiii. 22. and 1 Kings xix. 13. See Vitringa.

Ver. 12. For the day of the Lord of hosts] The prophet had declared what was in the designs of the divine court. He now proceeds to explain circumstantially what would be the objects of that judgment ; which he lays down metaphorically ; designing, first, kings, princes, nobles, kingdoms, republics, cities ; ver. 12—17. Secondly, idols, with which the Israelites had committed whoredom ; ver. 18—21. This judgment is thought to refer to that which God exercised upon the Jews by means of Nebuchadnezzar. See Ezek. xxx. 3 ; Amos, v. 20.

Ver. 13. And upon all the cedars of Lebanon] Lebanon is one of the images which is frequently made use of in the writings of the Hebrews. It was one of the remarkable mountains of Palestine, celebrated for its loftiness, and the tallness, largeness, and abundance of the cedars which shaded its top. Hence, agreeably to the symbolical hieroglyphics of the Egyptians, we find them making use of these images to denote any thing elate with pride, as well as whatever was august and sublime. In this place the cedars of Lebanon, and the oaks of Bashan, mean the kings, princes, and nobles, who carried themselves high, and behaved themselves insolently ; and so, agreeably to the same metaphorical style, which is very usual with the prophets, the high mountains and hills, in the next verse, signify kingdoms, cities, and states : See Jeremiah, xxv. 17, &c. The high towers and fenced walls, in the 15th verse, signify those who excelled in ingenuity, wisdom, and strength ; and the ships of Tarshish, &c. in the 16th verse, signify the merchants, who confided in their wealth and splendour. Vitringa renders the last words of the 16th verse, all desirable fabrics ; which is supposed to refer to the ornaments of their ships, in which the Tyrians were remarkably curious

18 And the idols he shall utterly abolish.

19 And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

20 In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made *each one* for himself to worship, to the

moles and to the bats ;

21 To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

22 Cease ye from man, whose breath *is* in his nostrils : for wherein is he to be accounted of ?

and superb. The 17th verse expresses, literally, what is delivered metaphorically in the preceding verse.

*Ver. 19. And they shall go into the holes of the rocks]* The idea here, as every one must perceive, is taken from the nature of the land of Canaan ; which was full of caves and dens. See Judg. vi. 2. The meaning of the metaphor is, that there should be at this time a great and most bright display of the divine majesty and justice, which the impious and hypocritical could not bear ; and that, stricken with the terror of the divine judgment, they should consult for their own safety, with the utmost terror and consternation, in caves, and dens, and holes of the earth. See Hosea, x. 10. Rev. vi. 16. This refers to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldees.

*Ver. 20. To the moles and to the bats]* Bats and other vermin haunt old ruined places. So Thevenot, describing the opened pyramid, tells us, there are a great many bats in it, which sometimes put out the candles that are made use of in examining that most ancient building ; that a particular hole, which he describes, had a great quantity of their dung in it ; and that they so swarmed there, that a Scotch gentleman who was in the company, and who seems alone to have had the courage to go down into it, was afraid that he should have been eaten up by them. Egmont and Heyman mention the same circumstance, but enrich their account with the addition of *owls, snakes*, and other reptiles ; for which reason they thought it necessary to fire off some pistols before they ventured into the pyramid, these creatures being by that means frightened away to their lurking places. I do not know how accurate they are in mentioning *snakes* in the pyramid ; but it is certain, that in buildings more ruined than that, such dangerous kinds of reptiles are very common. Thus Rauwolf, in his account of Babylon, tells us, that some of its ruins are so full of vermin, which have bored holes through them, that one may not come near them within half a mile, but only two months in the winter, when they come not out of their holes. Are we not rather to understand the words of the prophet in this place (which seem to signify *diggers of holes*) of these sorts of animals, rather than of *moles*, which a single Hebrew term is supposed to express, Lev. xi. 30. and that have no connection, which I know of, with ruins ? For the thought of the prophet seems to me to be, that the inhabitants of that country were to go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth to hide themselves from the vengeance of the Lord, to be executed by hostile armies ; leaving their temples, with their idols in them, to be demolished by their hands ; in which state of desolation these idols should long lie, companions of

those animals which are wont to bore holes in ruins, and also of *bats*, the frequenters of such destroyed places ; not that they were to carry their idols into caves and holes of the earth to secrete them from their enemies. See *Observations*, p. 423.

*Ver. 22. Cease ye from man]* The prophet here subjoins an admonitory exhortation to the men of his own and of all times, to dissuade them from placing any confidence in man, however excellent in dignity, or great in power ; as his life depends upon the air which he breathes through his nostrils ; which being stopped, he is no more ; and therefore, if you abstract from him the providence, the influx and grace of God, and consider him as left to himself, he is worthy of very little confidence and regard. See Psal. cxlvi. 3, 4. Viringa is of opinion, that the prophet here alludes immediately to the kings of Egypt ; See chap. xxxi. 3. And he adds, that the mystical interpretation of the period from the 12th to the present verse, may refer to other days of the divine judgment ; of which there are four peculiarly noted in scripture, as referring to the new œconomy. First, The day of the subversion of the Jewish government : Secondly, The day of vengeance on the governors of the Roman empire, the persecutors of the church, in the time of Constantine : Thirdly, The future day of judgment hereafter to take place upon Antichrist and his crew ; of which the prophets, and St John in the Revelation particularly, have spoken ; and, Fourthly, The day of general judgment. It is to the *third* day that he thinks the present period more immediately refers. See Rev. xvi. 14.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here a glorious prophecy of the establishment of the kingdom and church of Christ in the last days, the days of the Messiah. The gospel is the last dispensation.

1. *The mountain of the Lord's house*, his church shall be established in the top of the mountains, in Christ, who is the head of all principalities and powers, and, with a superiority over all the kingdoms of the earth, shall be exalted above the hills ; the antichristian powers, whether papal, pagan, or Mahometan, being subdued before it. *Note*, Whatever oppressions the church for a time may groan under, in the end she will see all her enemies at her feet.

2. *All nations shall flow unto it* ; many out of all lands shall be incorporated into it, and, having tasted the blessedness of Christ's service, shall be zealously solicitous to propagate his holy religion, and to engage others to go with them. *Many people shall go and say, Come ye along with us, and let*



CHAP. III.

*The great confusion which cometh by sin. The impudence of the people. The oppression and covetousness of the rulers. The judgments which shall be for the pride of the women.*

[Before Christ 760.]

**F**OR, behold, the LORD, the LORD of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem

and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water,

2 The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient,

3 The captain of fifty, and the honourable

us go up to the mountain of the Lord, his church, and to the house of the God of Jacob, the place he has chosen for his blest abode. And, as an argument to enforce their exhortation, they urge, *and he will teach us of his ways*, his holy, happy ways of grace, mercy, and peace; *and we will walk in his paths*, instructed by his word, and strengthened by his spirit. *Note*, (1.) The Gospel shall have a more glorious and universal spread than ever yet it has had. (2.) They who are Christ's people, are not only willing to follow him themselves, but are zealous to engage others to come and partake of the same blessing. (3.) None can teach us effectually, but God himself. Though the best means may be employed, unless he gives the increase, Paul plants and Apollos waters in vain. (4.) They who would go to the mount of God, must go up, in opposition to corrupt nature, and expect many difficulties in the ascent from the world and Satan; but every pain will be amply repaid, when we shall reach the summit. (5.) They who are taught of God, are obedient to his holy will; their knowledge has a sanctifying influence, engaging them to walk with and please God.

3. The means that God will employ for this purpose. *Out of Zion shall go forth the law, or doctrine; the Gospel, the law of the Spirit of life; and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem*, where the Incarnate Word appeared, and whence he sent forth his apostles to preach the Gospel unto every creature; which has already been done in a measure, and shall still more eminently be the case before the universal reign of Christ takes place in the world.

4. The blessing of Christ's government is declared. *He shall judge among the nations*, holding the reins of universal dominion, and ruling with the most consummate equity; *and shall rebuke many people*, convince and convert them from the error of their ways by his word and Spirit. Peace then will bless the earth, such as hath never yet been known: *They shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.* In part we see this fulfilled; so far as the Gospel obtains power and influence on the heart, it leads us to follow peace with all men; but the state of perfect harmony here described remains yet to come, when Christ shall reign over his saints gloriously.

5. The Gentile church addresses the Jewish people, solicitous for their conversion: *O house of Jacob, come ye, and join us in the worship and ordinances of the gospel; and let us walk in the light of the Lord*, in the light of the Sun of Righteousness, the divine Redeemer, whose word is our bright guide through time unto eternity; and while by faith and love we cleave to him, and look up in prayer

for continued support, he will lead us by his counsel, till he shall bring us to his glory.

2dly, We have a reason given for the divine conduct in the rejection of the Jews, and vocation of the Gentiles.

1. Their sins were great: they introduced the magic and forceries of the east; imitated, in their arts of divination, the Philistines; and preferred the children of strangers to native Israelites. Though God had forbidden them to multiply riches, and chariots, and horses, to appear formidable to their neighbours, yet they anxiously laboured to procure these as their confidence, instead of God's promise and care. Though he had so awfully warned them against idols, they had filled their land with them; and high and low joined in the idolatrous service. This description suits the times in which the prophet spoke, better than their state after their return from Babylon. Some refer this to antichrist and his followers, who call themselves the people of God, but shew the marks of an apostate church. The juggles, tricks, and frauds of Romish priests are well known. They enrich themselves by masses, indulgences, &c. Full of idols; worshipping images of pretended saints, and of many who never existed; and all sunk in the same hateful idolatry: like priest, like people.

2. Their doom was heavy: God had forsaken them, and given them up to a reprobate mind. This was verified in the amazing desolations which the Romans brought upon the Jewish people, when the body of the nation was so terribly destroyed; and shall be more fully accomplished in the eternal ruin of all the impenitently wicked in the day of God.

3dly, We have the desolations denounced, either upon the Jewish people, or upon the antichristian foes.

1. He bids them *enter into the rock*, as deriding their vain confidence, and shewing them how unable they will be to escape; when *for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his Majesty*, they should seek to hide their guilty heads. *Note*, (1.) At God's bar, the stoutest-hearted sinner will tremble. (2.) Vain will be every refuge in the day of judgment; no rock, no mountain can cover the guilty, when God ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

2. The pride of sinners shall then be laid low, the lofty looks shall sink into dejection and despair, and the haughtiness of the insolent lick the dust; *and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day*, in his judgments executed upon his enemies, and in his kingdom, which shall be fully established, and never more be disturbed by any antichristian foe. *Note*, Pride must come down; if we now fall not on our knees in humiliation, we must fall deep into hell under our sins.

man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator.

4 And I will give children *to be* their princes, and babes shall rule over them.

5 And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour: the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable.

6 When a man shall take hold of his brother of the house of his father, *saying*, Thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler, and *let* this ruin *be* under thy hand:

7 In that day shall he swear, *saying*, I will not be an healer; for in my house *is* neither bread nor clothing: make me not a ruler of the people.

8 For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is

3. The particulars of God's judgments upon the proud and lofty are mentioned. Though firm as mountains, and tall as cedars, they will be overturned; though guarded by the strongest fortresses, they cannot stand; all their confidence will fail them, and their glory vanish; their ships be destroyed, their pleasant pictures defaced, their idols abolished. The kings of the earth, and great men, and chief captains, who supported the beast, and the false prophet, and committed fornication with the great whore, will be ruined with her; their armadas, fitted out to war against the saints of God, will be dispersed and destroyed; their curious paintings of Madonas, saints, crucifixes, and the like idolatrous ornaments of their churches, will perish together, and their images, at which they paid their blind devotions, be for ever abolished.

4. The worshippers, convinced of the vanity of their idols, will renounce them, or, despairing of relief, in anger cast them to the moles and the bats, frightened with God's judgments, and flying to the clefts of the rocks for shelter. *Note*: (1.) Sooner or later the vanity of idols will appear; whether the grosser idolatry of images, or the more refined, yet equally abominable idolatry of inordinate affection placed on gold and silver, or any other creature; none of which will profit in a day of wrath. (2.) Many are driven from their outward sins, who never repent of them; either are so terrified, that conscience deters them; or the inconveniences and sufferings which they sustain withhold them; but still the unmortified love of them remains in their hearts.

5. The Prophet concludes with an exhortation *to cease from man*; either directed to the Jews, who relied on Egypt for help against the Babylonians; or to the followers of antichrist, who put such trust in the blasphemous pardons and indulgences issued from the papal chair; or in general to all, not to trust in man, even the greatest, for salvation, because he is a worm; *for wherein is he to be accounted of?* The Egyptians would help in vain, the great vaunts of the man who calls himself Christ's vicar, and God upon earth, are empty boasts of arrogance, and all human excellence nothing, and less than nothing, and vanity. *Note*: We cannot put too little trust in man, nor too great confidence in God. They who cease from the one, to live wholly upon the other, will find a rock instead of a reed.

### CHAP. III.

*Ver. 1. For behold, the Lord, &c.]* The prophet had, in the preceding chapter, declared in general the terror of

the day of the Lord. He now descends to a more particular explication of it. The connecting particle *for*, in this verse, evidently shews its connection with what has preceded. We have in this prophecy, first, a general proposition, in which God denounces that he will deprive the Jews of all protection; in this verse:—Secondly, a declaration of the particulars of this calamity, such as, a want of provision;—at the end of this verse: A deprivation of all desirable and proper human protection; ver. 2, 3. A substitution of a protection inadequate to their wants, ver. 4. a dissolution of all order, and total confusion of their polity, ver. 5—7. This prediction also refers to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldees. See Joel i. 1—4. and Jerem. xiv. 1, &c. xxxvii. 21. xxxviii. 9.

*Ver. 3. The eloquent orator] The skilful charmer, or enchanter. Le Clerc.*

*Ver. 4. And babes shall rule over them] And they shall wantonly lord it over them. Schultens. See Eccles. x. 16, 17. This was the state of things in Judæa, after the carrying away of Jehoiachin to Babylon.*

*Ver. 5. And the people shall be oppressed, &c.] Shall deal hardly one by another, &c. See the 38th chapter of Jeremiah throughout, and his Lam. iv. 16.*

*Ver. 6, 7. When a man, &c.]* In these verses the description of the confused state of the nation, mentioned in the fifth verse, is continued under an elegant figure, whereby the government, which otherwise is anxiously sought after, is refused by a person to whom it is offered. *I have neither clothing nor bread*, means, that he had not what was sufficient for sustaining the dignity and the expence of government. See chap. xxii. 21. And the phrase, *I will not be an healer*, means, that it was not in his power to bind up and to cure the wounds and miseries of the nation. See chap. i. 6. The sum of what the prophet means is, that the confusion and desperation of those times should be the greatest possible. He alludes to the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, after the carrying away of Jehoiachin, or the time of the last siege of Jerusalem by the Chaldees, when, as we learn from the sacred history, nothing could be more deplorable than the state of things. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 8. For Jerusalem is ruined]* The fourth member of the second part of this discourse begins here, which contains the justification and explanation of the divine judgment hitherto set forth, and may be thus divided: The *first* part is general, against the whole people, whose manners are described, ver. 8, 9. and the event is set forth, ver. 10, 11. The *second* is particular, against the rulers of the people, whose state and vices are set forth, ver.

fallen : because their tongue and their doings are against the LORD, to provoke the eyes of his glory.

9 The shew of their countenance doth witness against them ; and they declare their sin as Sodom ; they hide it not. Woe unto their soul ! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves.

10 ¶ Say ye to the righteous, that *it shall be well with him* : for they shall eat the fruit of their doings.

11 Woe unto the wicked ! *it shall be ill with him* : for the reward of his hands shall be given him.

12 ¶ *As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths !*

13 The LORD standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people.

14 The LORD will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof : for ye have eaten up the vineyard ; the spoil of the poor is in your houses.

15 What mean ye *that* ye beat my people

to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor ? saith the Lord GOD of hosts.

16 ¶ Moreover the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched-forth necks, and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet :

17 Therefore the LORD will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts.

18 In that day the LORD will take away the bravery of *their* tinkling ornaments about *their* feet, and *their* cauls, and *their* round tires like the moon,

19 The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers,

20 The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the ear-rings,

21 The rings, and nose-jewels,

22 The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping-pins,

23 The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils.

12—15. The *third* taxes the pride, luxury, and softness of the female sex, ver. 16. to chap. iv. 1. The past tense in this verse, as is very usual in the prophets, is to be understood of the future. See Vitringa, and Bishop Lowth's Preflections.

Ver. 10. *For they shall eat the fruit of their doings*] The certain consequence of righteousness is, by the divine determination, happiness either in this world or the next ; as the contrary is the certain consequence of wickedness, ver. 11. This is an admirable sentence to support the souls of the pious, amidst all the troubles of this life ; God will not forsake those who truly love and serve him. This reason teaches us, the experience of all times confirms, and it is the constant and comfortable doctrine of the word of God. The event must and will be happy to the good man.

Ver. 12—15. *As for my people, &c.*] In these verses the prophet describes the incapacity and weakness, the ignorance and corruption, the oppression and cruelty of the priests and rulers of the people ; such as we learn from history they were before the Babylonish captivity.

Ver. 16. *Moreover, the Lord saith*] After God had accused the rulers of the Jews of iniquity, injustice, and rapacity, in spoiling the people, he draws an argument of the same thing from the *pride* and *luxury* of the noble matrons and virgins, whose ornaments, collected from the spoils of the people, were borne proudly and insolently by them ; upon whom, therefore, he denounces judg-

ments ; for of these two parts consists this last period of his reproving discourse : urging first, in this verse, the crimes of luxury and wanton haughtiness ; denouncing, secondly, the punishment with which God would pursue these crimes, ver. 17. to chap. iv. 1. *Making a tinkling with their feet*, alludes to the custom, among the Eastern ladies, of wearing large hollow rings or circles, with little rings hanging round them. The cavities of these rings are filled with small flints, which make them sound like bells on the least motion. The rings or circles themselves open like a half moon, through which they put the small of the leg. There is a peculiar emphasis in referring these vices of haughtiness, luxury, wantonness, and the love of superfluous ornament, to the *daughters of Sion* ; that is, to the matrons and virgins of the holy city, chosen by God, and in which he himself inhabits ; the hater of luxury and vanity : a mountain and city, which those *daughters of Abraham* inhabited, whom, above all others, *outwardly* adorning became not, the *plaiting of hair*, the *wearing of gold*, and the *putting on of fine apparel* ; but the *hidden man of the heart*, modesty, humility, subjection. See 1 Pet. iii. 3. and Vitringa.

Ver. 17—24. *Therefore the Lord will smite*] Punishment, which, though slow, always follows vice, is here denounced upon the luxurious and proud women : First, A *taking away* not only of the ornaments with which they set off their beauty, but also their garments, which were of necessary use ; which is proposed in this verse, and largely set forth in

24 And it shall come to pass, *that*, instead of sweet smell, there shall be stink; and, instead of a girdle, a rent; and, instead of well-set hair, baldness; and, instead of a stomacher, a girding of sackcloth; *and* burning instead of beauty.

25 ¶ Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war.

26 And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she, *being* desolate, shall sit upon the ground.

in the following; ver. 17—24. Secondly, deprivation of their husbands and children; ver. 25, 26. Thirdly, the consequence hereof, by which this loss might be repaired, chap. iv. 1.

*With a scab*] Vitringa reads, *will make bald*. This and the other indignities mentioned in this verse were used to slaves, and were reckoned the highest degree of infamy and disgrace: and they refer to the captivity of these women under Nebuchadnezzar. See chap. xx. 4.

*Ver. 18—24. In that day the Lord will take away, &c.] In that day will the Lord take from them the ornaments, of the feet-rings, and the net-works, and the crescents; the pendants, and the bracelets, and the thin veils; the tires, and the fetters, and the zones, and the perfume-boxes, and the amulets; the rings, and the jewels of the nostril; the embroidered robes, and the tunics; and the cloaks, and the little purses; the transparent garments, and the fine linen vests; and the turbans, and the mantles: and there shall be, instead of perfume, a putrid ulcer; and, instead of well-girt raiment, rags; and, instead of a zone, a girdle of sackcloth: a sun-burnt skin, instead of beauty.* Lowth. Instead of a rent, ver. 24, the LXX read a rope. All this intimates, that they should be reduced, from the most exalted and opulent, to the most abject and servile state. They who would see the particulars in these verses fully explained, will find ample satisfaction in Vitringa.

*Ver. 25, 26. Thy men shall fall, &c.]* We have in these verses the second evil; the desolation and widowhood of the matrons and virgins. See Lamentations, ii. 21, 22. We may observe, that the prophet here does not address the women themselves, but Sion; which frequently is spoken of and represented in the character of a woman. Here she is described as a desolate widow, lamenting her ruined country, her solitary streets, and, in the posture of a mourner, bewailing her sad calamity. See Job, ii. 13. Lam. ii. 10. iii. 28.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, God had commanded them to cease from man and creature-confidences: these he here threatens to destroy, and mentions his glorious titles; *the Lord, the Lord of hosts*, able to the uttermost to execute the sentence that he pronounces.

1. Famine should come upon them; and terribly it raged in Jerusalem, both when besieged by Nebuchadnezzar, and afterwards by Titus; which last destruction seems to be chiefly the subject of this prophecy.

2. Desolations should be spread on every side; their mighty warriors fallen, and none remaining to lead their armies; no judge left to administer justice, no prophet to instruct or comfort them. The power had been taken from them to decide in matters of life and death, forty years before their destruction, John, xviii. 31. but after they had revolted, and were besieged by the Romans, a state of utter confusion began within the walls; the prudent and the ancient were removed by famine, or the sword: not so much as an inferior officer left, or one honourable man or

counsellor to be found; or when all order was dissolved, neither office, honour, nor wisdom maintained any longer reverence or attention. *The cunning artificer* ceased, when all business was at a stand; and the *eloquent orator* was silenced, when his voice could be no longer heard for the tumult.

3. The government devolved on those who were weak as infants, and unable to restrain the general disorder; or *men of illuſion*, as in the margin of our English Bibles, every arrogant factious spirit who headed the populace; whence a scene of violence and strange disorder must ensue, as was the case when, during the siege of Jerusalem, factions rent them in pieces, and every street afforded scenes of murder, rapine, and violence; all respect for age and station was lost, and lawless anarchy reigned.

4. So desperate would be their state, so ruined and desolate, that every one who had aught to lose would decline the administration, though pressed to be their ruler, as having clothing when the rest were naked as well as famished, and that *this ruin might be under their hand*, in order to alleviate, or extricate the nation from it: but not a man could be found who would accept the office: seeing their state desperate and incurable, each would swear himself incapable of healing the deadly breaches, and that he had neither food nor clothing to maintain such dignity, or to relieve their wants.

5. The cause of all this misery was their sins: *because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord*, and especially against his Christ, in their malignity and cruelty reviling him as an impostor, and crucifying him as the greatest of malefactors; *to provoke the eyes of his glory*, who, justly offended with such insult and rejection of himself and his gospel, caused this wrath to come upon them to the uttermost.

From the whole, we may learn, (1.) That sin unrepented of, will be sooner or later the ruin of every nation, and each individual sinner. (2.) It is among the sad symptoms of God's abandoning a people, when he sends them a famine of his word, and removes the ministry of his Gospel from them. (3.) The kingdom is in the way to speedy ruin, when folly and weakness are at the helm, and popular tumults dare interrupt the administration of justice.

2dly, We have,  
1. An awful woe denounced upon a wicked people. *Woe unto their soul!* the judgments were great through the weakness and wickedness of their rulers; who, though effeminate as women, and unable as children to protect them from their enemies, harassed and oppressed them: but this was the least part of their misery; their souls, their immortal souls, were more terribly exposed to the eternal wrath and curse of God: *they have rewarded evil to themselves*, their ruin is their own choice, and their sufferings the just reward of their sins. *Note;* (1.) If we lose our souls, we lose our all. (2.) In the day of God, the sinner will have none to blame for his misery but himself. Several grievous provocations are here mentioned.

[1.] They

CHAP. IV.

*In the extremity of evils, Christ's kingdom shall be a sanctuary.*

[Before Christ 760.]

**A**ND in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel:

[1.] They sin with a high hand, take no pains to conceal it, nor blush; with hardened impudence, openly avowing their abominations, as Sodom, shameless before men, and fearless of God. *Note;* (1.) Habitual sin hardens the conscience. (2.) They who are past shame are on the brink of ruin.

[2.] Their priests were the corrupters; they who should have led, deceived them by false doctrines; they who should have rebuked, cried peace to them; they whose examples should have reformed, hardened them. Such were the Pharisees in our Lord's day. But were they the only false teachers, the exalters of human merit, the false prophets of peace, and examples of iniquity? How many a priest will this suit in every age!

[3.] Their magistrates were oppressive, devouring the poor whom they should have protected; and, greedy of gain, sought only to fill their coffers, instead of exercising mercy and doing justice.

2. For these things *the Lord standeth up to plead*, expostulating with them on the wickedness of their ways; *What mean ye? &c. and standeth to judge the people*; either to vindicate his people from their oppressors, or rather to execute judgment upon the wicked, and this without respect of persons; the ancient, and princes, as deepest in guilt, will be the first in punishment. *Note;* (1.) When God standeth up to plead, what sinner but must tremble? Why will they not consider their ways, and prevent their ruin? (2.) The greatest find no favour as such at his tribunal; none can appeal from his sentence.

3. A distinction will be made amid these judgments. The righteous few shall not suffer with the wicked. *Say ye to the righteous*, who is justified through Jesus Christ, and by divine grace renewed in the spirit of his mind, *it shall be well with him*; peace of conscience, the sense of God's love, and the hope of his glory shall be his support in whatever national visitations he may be involved; *for, they shall eat the fruit of their doings*: as they have not provoked these judgments, they shall be delivered from them, or supported under them. *Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him* in time and in eternity; all his sufferings are embittered, his prospects dark, his life miserable, his death terrible; and after death he is accursed; he is doomed to devouring fire and everlasting burnings. Woe indeed to the impenitent, when *the reward of his hands shall thus be given him!*

3dly, The daughters of Zion had contributed to swell the national guilt, and must therefore share in these plagues.

1. Their sins are vanity and lewdness. Proud of their persons and ornaments, with elevated heads, and stretched-forth necks, they treated with an air of disdain their inferiors; while wantonly they cast their amorous glances around, and all their motions bespoke desire of admiration. *Note;* (1.) Vanity is woman's besetting sin. (2.) They

only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.

2 ¶ In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel.

who lay snares for others, are justly chargeable with every evil consequence which follows. (3.) A wanton eye betrays an impure heart.

2. Their punishments should correspond with their sins. Loathsome disease should deform and humble the proud beauty: their ornaments, which fashion dictated, and their vain hearts affected, pleased with the finery, and never thinking they had enough, must all be plundered; themselves enslaved, and led into captivity, and a girding of sackcloth should be their miserable covering: instead of perfumes and fragrance, they should be nauseous through poverty and ulcers; their shining girdles should give place to rags, tattered and rent; their braided locks, dressed with such curious art, now torn for anguish, or falling off through sickness, should leave them bald; and the scorching sun, or burning carbuncles, disfigure that fair face, which in the glass had led so often to self-idolatry; while their husbands should be slain by the sword, and no man left to marry them. Thus, sunk under universal desolations, the gates of the very city would mourn; and Jerusalem, as a disconsolate widow, in the dust bewail her irreparable ruin. *Note;* (1.) The sins of lewdness often make those loathsome, who were once most lovely. (2.) Extravagant finery easily leads to pinching poverty. (3.) Beauty is a dangerous gift, and often proves the bane of its possessor. (4.) Dress according to our station is becoming; but to be curious and expensive is to turn the covering of our shame into an increase of our sin.

CHAP. IV.

*Ver. 1. And in that day]* We have in this verse the consequence of the preceding evil. The prophet declares, that the war and captivity shall make such a prodigious scarcity in the male sex, that seven women shall be glad to apply to a single man for protection, preservation, and marriage: and importune him, though contrary to the natural modesty of their sex, to consent to *take away their reproach*; for not barrenness only, but a single state also, was reckoned opprobrious among the Jews. See Pl. lxxviii. 63. The emphasis and gradation of this verse are strong and remarkable. From the history of the times, and the *Lamentations* of Jeremiah, we learn, that the sword and the Babylonish captivity had very much thinned Judæa of men. See 2 Chron. xxxvi. 17. and Vitringa.

*Ver. 2. In that day, &c.]* The third part of this discourse begins here; in which is set forth the flourishing state of the remnant of the Jewish people after the times of the former calamity, under the care and providence of an illustrious person whom the prophet here calls *the BRANCH of Jehovah*. In this period we have, first, a prophecy of *the Branch of Jehovah*; and *the fruit of the earth*; to be seen in Sion as the king of the people congregated in his name. Secondly, the internal state of this remnant is described; that is, its singular quality or virtue of true internal

3 And it shall come to pass, *that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem:*

4 When the LORD shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.

5 And the LORD will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory *shall be* a defence.

6 And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.

internal spiritual holiness, with a certain sign of the time adjoined ver. 3, 4. Thirdly, the internal state of this people is shewn, with respect to the providence, care, and defence, wherewith it should be favoured by the Lord: ver. 5, 6. There can be no doubt that *the Branch of the Lord* means the Messiah. See Zech. vi. 12. Isai. xxviii. 5. lx. 21. and Vitringa.

*Ver. 3, 4. And it shall come to pass]* The doctrine of this period is twofold; first, that God by the spirit of judgment will purify and cleanse his church; and, secondly, that those who remain *written among the living*, i. e. the people of the Messiah, shall become truly holy. See Philip, iv. 3.

*Ver. 5, 6. And the Lord will create, &c.]* In this description of the external state and providential defence of the people of the Messiah, the metaphor is taken from the ancient symbol of the pillar of cloud and fire. *Upon all the glory shall be a defence*, means that the divine protection and defence shall be every where present, where God manifests himself by the extraordinary signs of his gracious presence. Every symbol of the divine grace and glory, such as was the cloud, brings with it the protection and defence of that place or assembly which is blessed with this prerogative. The event proves the truth of this interpretation. So long as God was in the temple, that place rejoiced in the benefit of the divine protection. When the voice was heard, "LET US DEPART HENCE," it was left to the desolation of its enemies. The same holds good in the Christian church. See Vitringa, and Josephus's history of the Jewish War, book vii. chap. 12.

REFLECTIONS.—In the midst of these terrible threatenings, a bright beam of hope dawns from the great and precious promises of the Messiah, whose kingdom and glory should then be exalted, when those who had rejected him received their righteous doom.

1. *In that day of Jerusalem's desolations, shall the Branch of the Lord, the Messiah, that should shoot from the stem of Jesse, Zech. iii. 8. Jer. xxiii. 5. Is. xi. 1. be beautiful and glorious, laden with the precious fruits of pardon, grace, and glory, and, though springing in his humiliation as a root out of a dry ground, yet, in his exaltation, shining brighter than the sun, glorified of his saints, and admired of all that believe: and the fruit of the earth, Christ Jesus incarnate on the earth, shall be excellent and comely; though once a worm, and no man, his visage marred more than any, now become the chief of ten thousand, and altogether lovely; for them that are escaped of Israel, whose eyes are opened to behold his excellence, and receive him as their deliverer.* Note; (1.) Though in the eyes of a carnal

world there is no beauty in Jesus for which they should desire him, faith can discern excellencies which make him above all things precious; so that we can say, Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is nothing I desire upon earth in comparison of thee. (2.) In the Saviour all fullness dwells: do we want pardon, peace, grace, comfort? we may come to him, and freely take enough to supply the most enlarged desires of our souls.

2. When the Messiah comes, to him will the gathering of the people be. *It shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, the gospel church, shall be called holy; shall be really made such by the powerful operations of the Spirit of holiness on their hearts and lives; even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem; and this separation of his people for himself will then appear, when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of by Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the Spirit of judgment, and the Spirit of burning; which may signify the judgments that God would bring upon the wicked, till they were utterly consumed; or rather the purging thoroughly his church, in order to cleanse them from their remaining corruptions and defilements; and this the Lord would also farther effectually accomplish, by raising up ministers and magistrates, endued with a spirit of wisdom, and animated with holy zeal for the perfecting of the faints, for the edifying of the body of Christ.* Note; (1.) Vain are their hopes of an interest in heaven, whose hearts continue earthly, sensual, devilish. (2.) When the Lord is pleased to work, he can easily find instruments, furnish them abundantly for their labour, and bless them with success.

3. The church of Christ, and every believer, will in the Lord enjoy protection, guidance, comfort, and security. As Israel's camp of old was preserved by God's pillar of the cloud and of fire, safely led through the howling wilderness, and hid from the scorching sun-beams; and as the tabernacle was defended by several coverings from the storm and tempest; so shall God's faithful people still enjoy as real, if not as sensible, tokens of his care in their passage through this wilderness: neither the storms of persecution, nor the blasts of temptation, nor the scorchings of affliction, shall be able to hurt them. He will defend *their glory*, the souls of his faithful ones, glorious in holiness; lead them safe through every trial, comfort them with a sense of his love, hide them in the day of wrath as under the shadow of a great rock in a weary land; and, after beholding the destruction of the ungodly, bring them safe to that blest tabernacle which he hath pitched in heaven for their everlasting abode.

CHAP. V.

*Under the parable of a vineyard, God defendeth his severe judgment: his judgments upon covetousness, upon lasciviousness, upon impiety, and upon injustice. The executioners of God's judgments.*

[Before Christ 760.]

**N**OW will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:

2 And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine-press therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.

CHAP. V.

*Ver. 1. Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song]* The third prophetic discourse is contained in this chapter; which, being partly parabolical, and partly proper, naturally divides itself into two principal parts. The first contains the parable, ver. 1—6. the other the explanation of the parable, ver. 7—30. In the former part we have, first, the exordium, placed as a kind of title before the song, in part of the first verse; then the parable itself, ver. 1—6. in which the chosen nation, Israel, is compared to a *vine*: and this also is threefold. The state and attributes of this mystical vine is first described, ver. 1, 2. then the consequence of that state is set forth, its unfruitfulness; thirdly, the divine judgment concerning it, after the preceding conviction, ver. 3—6. The exposition of the parable contains, 1st, its interpretation, ver. 7. 2dly, a twofold declaration, in which six grievous crimes of the Jewish people are enumerated, with a *woe* prefixed to them, ver. 8—23. and the sentence of God is declared concerning the punishment to be inflicted on these ungrateful covenant-breakers, ver. 24—30. If the destruction of the Jewish polity by the Chaldeans be primarily meant, the total destruction of that polity under the Romans seems secondarily and more emphatically foretold. It is supposed that Isaiah delivered this prophecy at the end of the reign of Uzziah. See Mic. iii. 12. Matth. xxi. 41. Luke, xx. 16.

*My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill]* The author of the *Observations* remarks, that the land of Israel is here called by the prophet, (as we have it in the margin of our Bibles) *a vineyard in the horn of the son of oil*. Vitranga seems to suppose, that it is so represented on account of its height; and such seems to have been the opinion of our translators in rendering it, *a vineyard in a very fruitful hill*. Hills are undoubtedly the most proper places for planting vineyards; and God might justly upbraid Israel with the *goodness of the country* in which he had placed them, its mountains themselves being very fertile: but if that was the sole intention, is it not somewhat strange that the prophet should on this occasion use an

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3 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.

4 What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

5 And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down.

6 And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

expression so *extremely figurative*? especially as the same prophet elsewhere often speaks of *the hills* with simplicity. I will not deny, that it is agreeable enough to the eastern style to express a hill by the term *horn*; for the supposition of Bishop Pococke seems to be by no means unnatural, who tells us, that there is a low mountain in Galilee, which has both its ends raised up in such a manner as to look like two mounts, which are called *the horn of Hutin*, and, as he thinks, from this circumstance, the village of Hutin being underneath it. But then it is to be remembered, that the term *horn* may equally at least be understood in a different sense. So Sir John Chardin informs us, that a long *strip of land*, which runs out into the Caspian sea, is called *the middle-sized horn*; and D'Herbelot tells us, that the place where one of the branches of the Euphrates falls into the Tygris is called *the horn*. By *the horn then of the son of oil*, the prophet might mean Syria, which is bordered on one side by the sea, and on the other by the most barren desert, and stretches out from its base to the south *like a horn*; and so these words will be a geographical description of Judæa of the poetic kind; representing it as seated in particular in the fertile country of Syria, rather than in a general and indeterminate way, as situated in a fertile hill. The propriety of describing Syria as a country of oil, no one will, I suppose, contest, as we find that oil was wont anciently to be carried from thence to Egypt; (Hosea, xii. 1.) and as we find the celebrated croisade historian, William of Tyre, describing Syria Sobal, as all thickly set with olive trees, so as to make prodigious woods, which covered the whole country, affording its inhabitants in those times, as they did their predecessors, a livelihood, and the destruction of which must have been their ruin.

*Ver. 2. And he fenced it, &c.]* The state of the vineyard, with respect to the benefits conferred upon it by God, is described in the latter part of the first, and the former part of this verse; the consequence of that state, the expectation of fruit, and the disappointment of that expectation, are described in the latter part of it. The whole is expressive, by allegory, of the advantages, privileges, and

3 S

blessings

7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.

8 ¶ Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!

9 In mine ears said the LORD of hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant.

10 Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the feed of an homer shall yield an ephah.

11 ¶ Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them!

12 And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their

feasts: but they regard not the work of the LORD, neither consider the operation of his hands.

13 Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst.

14 Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it.

15 And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled:

16 But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness.

17 Then shall the lambs feed after their manner, and the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat.

blessings conferred by God upon the Jewish state and people.

*Ver. 7. For the vineyard, &c.] Or, Now, the vineyard, &c.* We have in this verse the interpretation of the preceding parable; first, in general, which the history of the Jewish people, especially in the time of our Saviour, and before their destruction by the Romans, fully verifies. The word מִשְׁפַּח *misbach*, which we render *oppression*, is literally *a scab*; and it refers to that spiritual leprosy, that total corruption, wherewith the Jews were infected: *Men totally corrupt in mind.* See 1 Tim. vi. 5.

*Ver. 8. Woe unto them that join house to house]* The unfolding of the parable, after the general key in the preceding verse, comprehends two things, according to the argument of the parable: the crimes of these ungrateful people, and the punishment decreed to their crimes. The first crime condemned is avarice and rapacity; which is strongly described in this verse, and which prevailed remarkably among the Jews. Its punishment,—even the desolation of those houses which they coveted, and the devastation of those fields which they obtained so rapaciously, is set forth in the 9th and 10th verses. *In mine ears said the Lord,* ver. 9. signifies, *It was revealed in mine ears:* see chap. xxii. 14. Vitringa, and Lev. xxvii. 16.

*Ver. 11—14. Woe unto them that rise up, &c.]* Another vice which the prophet reproves in these verses, is luxury or intemperance; whose companion and daughter is Inconsideration of the works of God, whose child also is Ignorance. See the beginning of the 13th verse. *The work of the Lord, and the operation of his hands,* may signify, in their greatest extent, all that God has done, as well in the creation of the world as in the establishment and rule of his church from the beginning of time; but more particularly it may

here refer to the study of the divine law, and God's peculiar dispensations toward the Jewish people. *Ver. 13—16.* We have in these verses the punishment of the preceding crime, and ver. 17. the consequences of that punishment. To luxury, abundance, revelling, intemperance in the use of earthly goods, are opposed poverty, famine, thirst, a want of necessaries, a total abolition of all glory, magnificence, and pomp; and the like. The allusion in the beginning of the 14th verse is, according to Bishop Lowth, to the form of the ancient sepulchres, which were subterraneous caverns hollowed out of a rock; the mouth of which was generally closed by a great stone. The Hebrew, לִכְן הִרְחִיבָה שְׂאוֹל נַפְשָׁהּ *laken hirchiibab sheol napsabah*, might be rendered literally, *Wherefore the grave hath enlarged her soul.* The *profopopæia* is extremely fine and expressive, and the image is fraught with the most tremendous horror. Vitringa supposes that, according to the letter, some powerful prince, the terrible messenger of death and hell, is here described; who, armed by the divine judgment, spreads death and devastation around him. Nebuchadnezzar and the Roman princes are thus well characterized.

*Ver. 17. Then shall the lambs feed, &c.]* Vitringa is of opinion, that this verse refers to the first disciples of Jesus Christ, who, seeing and deploring the destruction of the Jews, should rest safely under the protection of God; while, according to the next clause, the Gentiles should be brought into the communion of the church, and rejoice in those benefits, prerogatives, and privileges, whereof the carnal, rich, and luxurious Jews were deprived. See John, x. 16. If this interpretation should not be approved, the verse may signify in general, that while severe judgments should fall upon the wicked, the righteous should enjoy the full protection of God, their great shepherd.

*Ver,*



18 ¶ Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope :

19 That say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see *it*; and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know *it* !

20 ¶ Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter !

21 Woe unto *them that are* wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight !

22 Woe unto *them that are* mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink :

23 Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him !

24 Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, *so* their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust : because they have cast away the law of the LORD of Hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

25 Therefore is the anger of the LORD kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them : and the hills did tremble, and their carcases were torn in the midst of the streets. For all this, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

*Ver. 18, 19. Woe unto them that draw iniquity, &c.]* The third crime is, the pretence of false and wicked reasonings, by which the profane bring their minds to perpetrate the most abominable crimes against the calls and admonitions of conscience; which is expressed metaphorically in this verse, and literally in the next, as is very usual with the prophet. By מושכי העון *moshkei hevon, drawing iniquity*, he alludes, according to the force of the Hebrew, to drawing it along like a plough; i. e. keeping it in perpetual action; promoting or encouraging the practice of it. By *cords of vanity*, are meant idle pretexts and specious arguments: such as these; that God does not regard human affairs; that many of the greatest sinners often go unpunished: that we see no proofs of the divine interposition, &c. See 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4. and Vitringa. We cannot have a fairer comment on these words than the state and disposition of the Jews, as described in the Gospel of Jesus Christ; who scoffed at all his divine offers, and those of his apostles, and would not regard the counsel of the holy One of Israel, till their own destruction overwhelmed them.

*Ver. 20. Woe unto them that call evil good, &c.]* The fourth crime alleged is, the subversion of all the principles of truth, and of equity in judgment. A most corrupt condition of a church and state is here described, in which men accustomed to vices begin, with the things themselves, to lose also the true names of them, and to draw a veil, as it were, over their impieties, by sanctifying their crimes with the name of virtues. Thucydides pathetically describes this evil in the third book of his history; and was not this remarkably the case with those Jews who called the holy and the temperate Jesus a glutton and a wine-bibber?

*Ver. 21. Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, &c.]* The fifth crime imputed to the Jews is, an arrogant presumption of the stability of their state, founded in carnal reason, with a contempt of the divine wisdom, and of the faithful admonitions of the ministers of God. See Rom. xi. 25. xii. 16. This was remarkably the characteristic of the Pharisees in our Saviour's time. See Matt. xi. 25. and John, ix. 39, &c.

*Ver. 22, 23. Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine]* This troop of vices is closed by drunkenness, joined with injustice and iniquity in judgment. This crime is distinct from that luxury and intemperance in feasts, which is attended with inconsideration of the works of God; ver. 11, 12. It is no wonder if men of this kind, whose reason and understanding are drowned in wine, pervert judgment, and are greedy of the mammon of unrighteousness to satisfy their lusts and appetites.

*Ver. 24. Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble]* The latter part of the parabolic song which is contained in the 6th verse, here begins to be more fully explained; and to the end of the chapter we have an account of that total destruction of the Jewish polity which should be brought upon it by a people most skilful in war, and coming from a very distant country. First, the punishment of this threatened destruction and most grievous vengeance is explained in general in this and the following verse. Secondly, the instruments of the destruction, the executors of the divine judgment, a fierce and warlike people, are described: ver. 26—29. Thirdly, the consequence of the destruction, and the desperation and troubled conscience of those who remained from this slaughter, are set forth. In the present verse the punishment is denounced, and the impelling cause of that punishment is related; the divine Spirit so directing the discourse, that with the punishment of men the justice of God might immediately appear. The metaphor in this verse is taken from a tree, whose root and flower being wholly consumed, nothing remains but useless wood. It expresses the total destruction of the Jewish state. See Heb. vi. 7, 8. *The law of the Lord, and the word of the holy One of Israel*, refer more immediately to the divine word of grace offered by Jesus Christ. Vitringa.

*Ver. 25. Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled, &c.]* The meaning is, that God, before the time of that final vengeance concerning which the prophecy treats principally, had afflicted this rebellious people with the most grievous calamities; or rather, would afflict and chastise them: that those calamities should consume many, who, slain in

26 ¶ And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss unto them from the end of the earth : and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly :

27 None shall be weary nor stumble among them ; none shall slumber nor sleep ; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken :

28 Whose arrows *are* sharp, and all their bows bent, their horses' hoof shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind :

29 Their roaring *shall be* like a lion, they shall roar like young lions : yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and shall carry it away safe, and none shall deliver it.

30 And in that day they shall roar against

the wars, should be trod upon by their enemies like the dung in the streets ; most certain indications of the divine justice and severity ; while they, unawakened by these chastisements, would not attempt to appease the divine wrath, but would provoke it still more by repeated crimes ; so that at length it should come upon them to the utmost. See 1 Thess. ii. 16. and Dan. ix. 26. The expression, *the hills did tremble*, is metaphorically, " They were struck " with grievous slaughters and calamities, the fame of " which extended itself widely." See Ps. xviii. 7. and Jer. iv. 24. The phrase *His hand is stretched out still*, which is familiar to our prophet, (see chap. ix. 12. 17. 21. x. 4.) signifies that there is no end of slaughters, miseries, calamities, punishment ; but that the chastising God, with extended hand, still keeps the scourge ready to add stroke to stroke. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 26. And he will lift up an ensign* ] That decree of the divine severity, which had been spoken of in general in ver. 24. is here explained : particularly God is shewn to be the supreme general or leader of the people which were to come from far to execute his vengeance ; they were to assemble at his setting up his *ensign* as a signal, and at his *hissing*,—a metaphor taken from bees, (see on chap. vii. 18.) which by *hissing*, *whistling*, or some sound of that kind, used to be drawn out of their hives, as Bochart has fully shewn. Hieroz. pars ii. lib. 4. cap. 10. And the meaning is, that God would collect the people like bees, by the slightest indication of his will, and bring them into Judæa to execute his vengeance. We have next the place from which they should be brought : *from far*, and *the ends of the earth* ; and the manner of their expedition, or execution of the divine wrath ; that they should *come with speed swiftly* : in all which, though the Chaldeans may be understood, yet it is most undoubted that the prophecy is with peculiar force applied to the Romans. See Nahum, chap. iii. 1, &c.

*Ver. 27—29. None shall be weary, &c.* ] We have in these verses a description of the quality of the forces which should come against Jerusalem ; their vigour, activity, and diligence : ver. 27. their military expedition, readiness, skilfulness, and apparatus ; ver. 28. their fortitude and undaunted courage ; ver. 29. Particulars for which the Romans were remarkably eminent.

*Ver. 30. And if one look unto the land* ] Isaiah here closes this prophecy with a strong and eloquent description of the consequences of this calamity ; setting forth, in the most emphatical terms, the utter confusion, blackness, and desperation of the miserable Jews. See chap. viii. 22. Nothing can more exactly agree with the state of the Jews

after their destruction by Titus, than these words. Vitringa.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, To bring these sinners to a sense of their guilt and danger, they have line upon line, and precept upon precept ; every winning means is tried, whether by affecting parables or plain address. The prophet here warns them in poetic measure and parabolic figure. God the Father calls it a song of his well-beloved, of Christ, the beloved Son of the Father, and the object of chief regard and affection to every true believer. Under the parable of a vineyard, the prophet shews,

1. The peculiar care God had taken of them. He had placed his vineyard *in a very fruitful hill*, where corn, wine, oil, and every earthly blessing abounded ; *fenced it in* from the rest of the world, and protected them night and day by his Almighty power ; *gathered out the stones thereof*, the Canaanites hard and obdurate as stones ; *planted it with the choicest vine*, the seed of Abraham his chosen, and gave them the knowledge of his true religion and pure worship ; *and he built a tower in the midst of it*, the temple where his presence rested in the midst of them, their glory and defence ; *and also made a wine-press therein*, his altar, on which their oblations might be poured out, and their sacrifices offered. *Note* ; In all our privileges and blessings, whether temporal or spiritual, God's hand should be acknowledged by us.

2. The reasonable expectations that he entertained, and the disappointment he met with. *He looked that it should bring forth grapes*, and it brought forth *wild grapes* ; instead of the fruits of righteousness, it produced poisonous principles, hypocritical professions, or openly infamous practices. *Note* ; (1.) If God hath given us outward privileges, he justly expects suitable returns. It is not merely the leaves of profession, nor the green grape of future purposes, but the sound fruit of purity and holiness, that he demands. (2.) When God is said to be disappointed, it means not that he did not foresee or know what would be the event, but this is spoken after the manner of men, according to what we, in a like case, should have expected. (3.) They who produce the wild grapes will set an edge on their own teeth, when God's righteous vengeance awakes to punish the transgressors.

3. He appeals to the men of Judah and Jerusalem. In a case so very evident, he might rest it on their own consciences what more could have been done ? what greater advantages, civil and religious, could they desire to have enjoyed ? wherefore then have they acted so vile a part, and made such unsuitable returns ? *Note* ; (1.) The sinner

them like the roaring of the sea: and if one look unto the land, behold darkness and sorrow, and the light is darkened in the heavens thereof.

ner acts most unreasonably, as well as most ungratefully, and will in the day of God appear without excuse. (2.) When we consider our mercies, who must not tremble for his own unprofitableness? (3.) Though God's patience last long, it will not endure for ever: when the wicked are incorrigible, their ruin is near.

4. God pronounces judgment upon them. *I will take away the hedge thereof*, remove their defence, and give them for a prey to their enemies; *and it shall be eaten up* by wild beasts, such as were the Roman soldiers, massacring without pity; *and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down*, when the besiegers entered at the wide breaches, utterly destroying all before them, laying both city and people in the dust. *And I will lay it waste*, without inhabitants; *it shall not be pruned nor digged*, neither magistrates, prophets, nor ministers, should any longer attempt to cultivate it; *but there shall come up briars and thorns*, errors and immoralities, fatal as universal: *I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it*, no dew of heavenly influence shall descend upon them, but they shall be left to their hard and impenitent hearts. *Note*; The nation and people from whom God in displeasure withdraws his ordinances and his ministers, are in a miserable way indeed.

5. The prophet applies the parable to the Jewish people; the commonwealth of Israel was the vineyard, and the members of it the once pleasant plants, but now become the degenerate plants of a strange vine. The fruits that God expected were, righteousness and judgment, honesty and impartial administration of justice; but, instead thereof, the cry of oppression went up to God, and called down vengeance on the guilty land. *Note*; Men's sins pass not unnoticed: God sees, and will assuredly visit for these things.

2dly, We have two heavy woes denounced against two crying sins, worldly-mindedness and sensuality; the common iniquities, not of the Jews only, but of our own days, and which will as assuredly now bring down the wrath of God as then.

1. They were insatiable, and ever coveting to enlarge their possessions, to engross every spot around; and, while they might gratify their own covetousness, careless what inconveniencies others suffered thereby, or what injuries they sustained, so that themselves might but be accommodated. Therefore God threatens them by a revelation made to his prophet: *Many, or great houses shall be desolate*, when their avaricious princes and chief men went into captivity, or were slain by the sword, and none left to dwell in those gorgeous palaces which they with so much solicitude had raised; and, instead of the plenty they expected from joining field to field, such a curse should be upon the land, that ten acres of vineyard should not produce half so many gallons of wine, nor their ground yield scarcely a tenth of the seed they had sown. *Note*; (1.) They who set their hearts on worldly things are sure to be disappointed. (2.) Though it be no sin to purchase what our neighbour is willing to part with, yet to be ever contriving how to increase our stores, to have a greedy eye on

every adjoining field in order to make our own estate more complete; *O si angulus ille proximus accedat, qui nunc denormat agellum\**; this is to provoke God to smite our possessions with a curse.

2. They were sunk in sensuality and pleasure. Eager to quench, or rather inflame, their raging thirst, they rose early, and began the day with strong drink, and protracted their carousals till night; flushed with wine, no evil was too much for them; rage, revelling, lust, reigned uncontrolled. Music, prostituted, served to heighten their passions; drunken, lewd, the song, with pleasing sound, stole deeper into the heart; and no place was left for serious recollection—God, his judgments, works and ways, and his Messiah were utterly disregarded. *Note*; (1.) Drunkenness is not only a vice most brutal and odious in itself, but the pregnant author of every abomination. (2.) The most innocent things are liable to grievous abuse; even music may lull the soul into eternal ruin. (3.) When the mind is enslaved by lust and pleasure, God is forgotten, and every thought of him and his judgments thrust out as irksome intruders. Woe therefore unto them! a judgment near and terrible approaches; *therefore my people are gone, or are going into captivity*, by the Babylonians first, and afterwards by the Romans, *because they have no knowledge*, by their sins are become brutish, insensible of their danger, and wilfully blind to their impending ruin: *their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst*, a just judgment on those who wasted so much in rioting and drunkenness: and dreadful, even to read of, were their sufferings during the sieges they sustained, so far that many of them ate their own children. *Therefore hell hath enlarged herself*, a pit, deep like Tophet, is dug to receive the corpses, perishing so numerously by famine, pestilence, and the sword; or the place of torment yawns to ingulph their polluted souls, *and hath opened her mouth without measure*, insatiate to devour the wicked; *and their glory, the nobles, and their multitude*, the populace, or the rulers, though never so many as well as mighty; *and their pomp*, their rich ones who lived in splendor, *and he that rejoiceth in careles gaiety and carousing, shall descend into it*, into the grave, or afterward into hell together; where, instead of mirth and riot, their everlasting portion will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Thus shall the mean and mighty perish together, and leave a warning to others, of the danger of their ways. Let the drunkard solemnly peruse this judgment; let the careless pleasure-loving world behold their appointed end, that before it be too late they may consider their ways, and prevent so fearful a destruction.

3. By the execution of such just judgment would God be glorified; his holiness, and hatred of sin, appear; his righteousness in executing vengeance be manifested. *Then also shall the lambs feed after their manner, or according as they are led*; the lambs of Christ's flock, fed by his word, and walking in all his holy ways; *and the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat*, the Gentiles shall both possess the

\* O that you neighbouring angle, which now spoils the regularity of my field, could be joined to it!

## C H A P. VI.

*Isaiah, in a vision of the Lord in his glory, being terrified, is confirmed and receiveth his message: he sheweth the obstinacy of the people, even to their desolation. A remnant shall be saved.*

[Before Christ 760.]

**I**N the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne,

high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple.

2 Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

3 And one cried unto another, and said,

country of Israel, and partake of those gospel blessings which the proud and self-righteous Jews despised and rejected. *Note;* (1.) God will not want a people; if some be obstinate, others will hear and obey him. (2.) If sinners will not glorify God's mercy by their humble acceptance of his grace in a Redeemer, they must glorify his justice in the place of torment.

3dly, Two woes are denounced, but there are others yet to come equally grievous, and all dating their origin from sin, which then was, now is, and ever will be, the cause of all our misery. Happy, did we but take warning by others' woes, and flee their iniquities.

1. Their sins are many.

(1.) *They draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart-ropes,* strain every nerve, use every argument to accomplish their wicked purposes; rushing into temptation, and bent on gratifying their evil desires at all events.

(2.) They defied God, despised the warnings of his prophets, and when his Son appeared, treated his pretensions with contempt. *They say, let him make speed, and hasten his work;* the men of that generation said, where are the threatened judgments? deriding their prophets who brought the message: the Jews said, if he be the Son of God, let him come down from the cross; and the infidel sinner continues thus to treat God's warnings in every age.

(3.) They sought to confound good and evil, wilfully misrepresented truth as falsehood, branding the ways of godliness as miserable, and boasting that the paths of sin are the only substantial bliss. *Note;* The devil and wicked men ever study to dress up religion and its professors in the most forbidding colours, while every glaring vice is palliated with some soft name, or pleaded for as commendable. Seriousness and singularity are termed pride and moroseness, while a life of dissipation is called the indulgence of a little innocent pleasure; a debauch, the enjoyment of good company; sordid parsimony, frugality; and daring infidelity, free-thinking: but names alter not things, nor change their nature; the sweetness of God's good ways abides the same, and all the glosses of sinners will not prevent their feeling the bitterness of the flames of hell.

(4.) They were proud and self-sufficient, *wise in their own eyes,* though so infatuated, and *prudent in their own sight,* valuing themselves on their understanding and management. Thus the Pharisees said, we see, when most deeply their sin remained. *Note;* Conceit of our own wisdom is among the most fatal of errors.

(5.) They were *mighty to drink wine,* of strong heads, and gloried in the quantity of liquor they could carry off;

*and men of strength to mingle strong drink,* delighting in being able to drink others down, as it is termed by the debauchees. *Note;* (1.) They who are mighty to drink wine, shall shortly drink the wine of the wrath of God, unless they repent. (2.) The strength of a man's constitution will not exculpate him from the guilt of drunkenness. To sit long at the cups and delight in them, is as evil as to fill the table with vomit, or stagger in their walk. (3.) They who glory now in their shame, of having outdrank their companions, in hell will find small joy in these exploits.

(6.) They basely perverted justice for gain. Their magistrates *justified the wicked for reward,* money covered all crimes; while *they take away the righteousness of the righteous from him;* the poor who cannot bribe, or the upright that dare not, however just their cause, are sure to be cast: for iniquities like these God will visit, and his soul be avenged of such a people as this. Therefore,

2. He denounces their doom. *Because they have cast away the law of the Lord,* the doctrine sent them by his prophets, and the Gospel preached by his Son, and *despised the word of the holy One of Israel,* treated it with contempt and disregard; *therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff,* so sudden, terrible, resistless, and irreparable, should their destruction be; *so that their root shall be as rottenness,* and therefore the whole political tree must perish; *and their blossom go up as the dust,* all their pomp, riches, and glory be dispersed, as withered blossoms before the wind. *Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against his people,* once his chosen, now apostate from him, and exposed to his wrath. Present judgments were upon them, their princes slain in their streets, and none to bury them; yet these were but the beginning of sorrows: God's anger was far from being turned away, and greater woes were approaching, his hand being stretched out still. *He will lift up an ensign,* as the signal for marching, *to the nations from far;* the Romans, composed of various people, and bringing their troops from distant provinces: *he will hiss unto him, or them,* the army, or the general, as a shepherd whistles to his dog to come. Instantly they will obey, marching speedily; no weariness shall retard, or difficulties stumble them: so eager would they be to hasten to the siege, that they would march day and night, and not even undress themselves, or loose their shoes, to lie down to sleep by the way; expressions denoting their indefatigable diligence. Their archers should be ready to shoot, their cavalry strong, their chariots of war swift, and come thundering along. Fierce as lions, their roar should intimidate; strong as lions, their defenceless prey would fall, and none be able to deliver the devoted people of Judæa from the ravening Roman soldiers. In that day of the siege of Jerusalem,

Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of Hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory.

4 And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

5 ¶ Then said I, Woe *is* me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean

lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of Hosts.

6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, *which* he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

7 And he laid *it* upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

Jerusalem, they should roar with their shouts and battering engines, as the tempestuous sea; and the land of Judæa should be ravaged and sunk under its distress, as if the luminaries of heaven were extinguished, Matth. xxiv. 29. their whole polity, civil and ecclesiastical, be utterly dissolved; and priests, princes, and people, sink in one promiscuous ruin. *Note;* (1.) When sinners reject the counsel of God against their own soul, they bring upon themselves swift destruction. (2.) God never wants instruments to execute his vengeance upon a guilty nation. (3.) When the Lord gives the word, the damnation of the wicked no longer slumbers. (4.) They who have fled from the light of truth to the darkness of sin, are justly consigned to the eternal darkness.

CHAP. VI.

*Ver. 1. In the year that king Uzziab died, I saw, &c.]* We have in this chapter the *fourth* sermon, containing an account of a wonderful and august vision wherewith the prophet was favoured by the Lord: The design of which is two-fold; to exhibit a figure of the kingdom of the Son of God, hereafter to be manifested in the world, and to foretel the future blindness and hardness of heart of the greatest part of the Jewish nation. There are three parts of this discourse. The first contains a symbolical manifestation of the glorious Majesty of the God of Israel, ver. 1—4.; the second, the sanctification of Isaiah to the performance of an important prophetic office, ver. 5—7.; the third, a peculiar command which the prophet received from God, concerning the future and unhappy state of the Jews, 8—13. There seems to be no doubt that this vision is to be immediately referred to the times of the gospel, though it is possible that it has some reference also to the men of Isaiah's own time. See Vitringa.

*I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up]* In this first part of the vision, we have the *species* of revelation which happened to the prophet, which he calls a vision, but in which the prophet seems to have been rather passive than active;—and the *object* of the vision, which consists of various parts: first, the appearance of Jehovah, sitting on a lofty throne, clothed as it were with a royal robe, the skirts of which filled the temple: Secondly, of the seraphim next to the throne, celebrating the majesty and greatness of God; ver. 2, 3. And, thirdly, the consequences of this glorious appearance; the commotion of the posts of the temple, and its repletion with smoke, ver. 4. The place of this vision is supposed to be in the temple. We are not to imagine that Isaiah saw the Godhead itself, but some symbolical representation of it, most likely the appearance of Christ in the human form in glory. See John

xii. 41. For there seems to be no doubt, from the description, that the appearance was human. See Vitringa, and Waterland's sixth sermon on the Trinity.

*Ver. 2. Above it stood]* The state, figure, and actions of the Seraphim are here described: The word סֵרָפִיִּם *seraphim*, says Vitringa, signifies fiery and shining bodies, from שָׂרַף *seraph*, to burn; (see Numb. xxi. 6.) and is in this place to be understood of persons of a bright and splendid appearance, covered with wings, and in a human form. This part of the vision seems manifestly to be taken from the representation of the Divine Glory, as it was exhibited in the Holy of Holies; where was the mercy-seat, and the cherubim representing the Divine Majesty, attended with the angelic host; and thus also the fourth verse refers to the temple, and the priest offering up the incense, more especially when he entered into the Holy of Holies. This passage, mystically understood, represents the future dominion of Christ as Mediator, and the diffusion of his gospel through the world by his messengers and ministers; the filling the earth with his glory, and spreading throughout the world the merits of his divine intercession. For a large and learned application of each particular the reader is referred to Vitringa.

*Ver. 5—7. Then said I, &c.]* The second part of this vision contains the sanctification of the prophet for the undertaking of a great prophetic office, and consists of two parts: the first describes the prophet's state of mind upon the sight of the preceding illustrious vision: His consternation upon the sense of his great unworthiness. He expresses his fear of perishing, (*I am undone*,) because, being a man of unclean lips, and dwelling amongst an unclean people, he was therefore unfit to join in the celebration of the Godhead with the seraphim. The *uncleanness of the lips* means, not only offence in words, but the want of due qualifications for the important office in which he was to be employed. We have, secondly, in the 6th and 7th verses, the benefit of sanctification conferred upon the prophet by a singular mode of lustration. The idea is here again from the temple; and it has been generally allowed, that the *live coal*, or *fire*, is a symbol of the purifying and sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit. See Acts, ii. 3. Matth. iii. 11.; and this coal, taken from the *altar*, refers to the participation of the gift of the Spirit, as it proceeds from the merit of the great Sacrifice for the sins of the world. See Heb. ix. 14. The designation of Isaiah to the prophetic office is here particularly taught, and more remotely the sanctification of men to the ministry of the gospel; some of whom, like St. Paul, being men of impure lips, and unholy lives, are by the word of grace illuminated, sanctified, made holy and seraphic, and glowing with love and zeal for the glory of Christ. See Vitringa.

*Ver.*

8 ¶ Also I heard the voice of the LORD, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here *am* I; send me.

9 And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.

10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with

their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

11 Then said I, LORD, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate,

12 And the LORD have removed men far away, and *there be* a great forsaking in the midst of the land.

13 ¶ But yet in it *shall be* a tenth, and it shall

*Ver. 8. Also I heard the voice of the Lord*] We have here the *third* part of this vision, comprehending, first, a trial of the disposition of the prophet, now sanctified, with his reply to the Lord, in the present verse; secondly, the command delivered to him concerning the execution of the divine judgment upon the Jews, of blindness and hardness of heart, ver. 9, 10. thirdly, a more full and explicit declaration of a most grievous temporal judgment, which should be joined with this spiritual one; ver. 11—13. The present verse is to be understood *humano more*, (after the manner of men) and as principally designed to call forth the zeal and activity of the prophet to his office.

*Ver. 9, 10. And he said, Go, &c.*] In this commission given by God to the prophet, we have, first, the preface, in which he is enjoined to bear God's denunciation to the Jewish people; whom God does not as usual call his people, but *this people; Go and tell this people*. We have, secondly, the words themselves, comprehending the divine command, and which God puts into the mouth of the prophet; words, which we find frequently repeated, at least as to their sense, in the gospels, where we shall have occasion to speak more fully concerning them. See Exod. ix. 34. In the style of Scripture, the prophets are said *to do* what they declare will be done; therefore the words, *Make the heart of this people fat*, is as much as to say, "Denounce my judgments upon this people, that their hearts shall be fat, &c." This prophecy might relate, in some measure, to the state of the Jews before the Babylonish captivity, but it did not receive its full completion till the days of our Saviour; and in this sense it is understood and applied by the writers of the New Testament, and by our Lord himself. The prophet is informed in the 11th and 12th verses, which contain the third part of the divine commission, that this infidelity and obstinacy of his countrymen will be of long duration. There is a remarkable gradation in denouncing these judgments: Not only Jerusalem and the cities should be *wasted without inhabitant*, but even the single houses should be without men; and not only the houses of the city should be without men, but even the country should be utterly desolate; not only the people should be removed out of the land, but the Lord should *remove them far away*; and they should not be removed for a short period, but there should *be a great, or rather a long forsaking in the midst of the land*. And has not the world seen all these particulars exactly fulfilled? Have not the Jews laboured under a spiritual blindness and infatuation, in hearing but not understanding, in seeing but not per-

ceiving the Messiah, after the accomplishment of so many prophecies, after the performance of so many miracles? And in consequence of their refusal to convert and be healed, have not their cities been wasted, and their houses without men? Have they not been removed far away, into the most distant parts of the earth? and has not their removal or banishment been now of about 1700 years duration? And do they not still continue deaf and blind, obstinate and unbelieving? The Jews, at the time of the delivery of this prophecy, gloried in being the peculiar church and people of God; and would any Jew of himself have thought or have said, that this nation would, in process of time, become an infidel and rejected nation; infidel and rejected for many ages, oppressed by men, and forsaken as a nation by God? It was above 750 years before Christ that Isaiah predicted these things; and how could he have predicted them, unless he had been illuminated by the divine vision, or how could they have succeeded accordingly, unless the spirit of prophecy had been the Spirit of God? See Bishop Newton on the Prophecies, vol. i. p. 233. and Vitringa.

*Ver. 13. But yet, &c.*] *But though there shall yet remain in it a tenth part, even that shall be for a prey. As an elm and as an oak, of which, when they are lopped, the trunk remaineth; so the holy seed shall be the trunk thereof.* See Vitringa, and compare Rom. xi. 19.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Isaiah had before, at God's command, begun his prophetic employment: a solemn confirmation of it is made in this august vision, as a means to strengthen his faith, and quicken his diligence in the discharge of his important office. The date of the vision is the year in which Uzziah died, after a long and pious reign of fifty-two years; though during the latter part of it the leprosy, under which he laboured, excluded him from the administration, which was lodged in the hands of his son. We have,

1. What the prophet saw; *I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne*, the Lord Jesus Christ, enthroned in the glory which he had with the Father before the worlds were; for to him is this expressly applied, *John*, xii. 41. and contains one of the most incontestable proofs of the essential Godhead of our incarnate Redeemer; *high and lifted up*, exalted above all blessing and praise, infinitely transcending all created excellence; the king eternal, to whom every knee must bow, and every tongue confess: *and his train filled the temple*, either the bright angelic spirits who graced his

return, and shall be eaten : as a teil-tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast *their leaves* : so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.

his presence, or the irradiation which beamed around him : and perhaps it may typically refer to his church on earth, filled with the gifts and graces which, on the day of Pentecost, were so eminently bestowed upon the apostles ; by whose preaching a vast accession of converts was quickly made to the church. *Above it, or near him, stood the seraphims, the burners, the heavenly hosts, or those emblematic representatives of the ministers of the gospel.* Ezek. i. 13. *Each one had six wings ; with twain he covered his face, as unable to bear the transcendent brightness of the Redeemer's glory ; with twain he covered his feet, as in his best services unworthy of God ; and with twain he did fly, delighted, ready and swift to obey God's high commands.* Thus do Christ's ministers with shame acknowledge their unworthiness to look up to God, and disclaim all merit even from their holiest walk ; while, burning with zeal, they are ready to fly at his word to preach his gospel and fulfil his pleasure. *Note ;* (1.) We cannot form ideas of the glory of our Immanuel according to his excellent greatness ; it surpasseth knowledge. (2.) Before God, the highest creature stands ashamed ; and how much more cause hath man, a sinful worm, to blush and be confounded when he appears before the throne of Jesus. (3.) Burning zeal for God is the character of his faithful ministers. (4.) Delight and cheerful readiness for God's work and will is the way to rise to fellowship with angels.

2. What he heard. *One cried unto another, with fervency and unanimity, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the triune God, glorious in all his attributes, and especially in his holiness ; the whole earth is full of his glory, manifested in all the works of creation and providence, but especially in those of redemption and grace.* Thus do God's ministers of flame on earth unite in preaching the one glorious gospel, and giving to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the praise of that holiness displayed in the justification of the sinner's person, and the sanctification of his soul, by the atoning blood of Jesus, and by his efficacious grace.

3. The effect of this cry. *The posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, denoting the removal of the temple worship and service ; or the powerful effect of the gospel on men's consciences, shaking their vain confidence, and awakening their souls to a sense of sin : and the house was filled with smoke, in allusion to the cloud of incense which covered the mercy-seat on the day of atonement, and intimating God's acceptance of his ministers' services ; or signifying the judgments which would come upon the Jewish people, when their city and temple should be destroyed ; or, finally, the smoke of the sinner's torment that ascendeth up for ever and ever.*

2dly, Struck with the astonishing vision, the prophet is confounded, conscious of his own sinfulness, and inability to stand before this holy Lord God.

1. He laments over himself. *Woe is me, a sinful worm, for I am undone, if this holy God be strict to mark what is against ; because I am a man of unclean lips, defiled in nature, and probably conscious of fear and want of boldness in the delivery of the awful messages with which he was*

charged ; and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, whose iniquities were, to his bitter sorrow, ready to draw down the heavy judgments of God upon them : for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts, the Lord Christ, whose perfection of holiness, like the bright beams of day, discovered those spots and impurities which in the dark before he did not perceive. *Note ;* (1.) The more we know of God's purity and perfections, the more shall we discover of our own vileness. (2.) The highest saints of God, who know him best, are most lowly in their own eyes. (3.) A good man not only laments over his own unfaithfulness ; but, when he looks around, his heart is grieved with the filthy conversation of the wicked, and he trembles for their approaching ruin.

2. A gracious message is sent him for his encouragement. *Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, on his humbling confession, having a live coal in his hand, signifying the powerful and lively word of the gospel, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar of burnt-offering, which was the type of the Lord Christ, whose atoning sacrifice alone can procure the sinner's pardon ; and he laid it upon my mouth, not to consume his unclean lips, but to purify them from their pollution ; and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips, intimating the application of the pardoning word of God to the sinner's soul, by which he is enabled to take the comfort of the promise ; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged, or expiated, utterly blotted out before God, wiped away from his conscience, and perfectly expiated by the promised sacrifice of Jesus.* *Note ;* (1.) God delights to comfort the mourners in Zion ; penitent prayers will find an answer of peace and joy. (2.) Nothing can heal the heart broken under sin, but the precious balm of atoning blood applied by faith in the word of promise. It must be this coal from the altar, not strange fire, which can quicken the perishing soul. (3.) They who would speak to God, or for God, with confidence, must first hear him speak to them pardon and peace. (4.) None are so fit or able feelingly to preach to sinners the grace of a Redeemer, as they who have, by experience, tasted the riches of his love to their own souls. (5.) The ministers of God, like burning seraphs, should fly to the relief of the poor and broken-hearted sinner, with the invigorating word of kind consolation.

3. Isaiah offers himself for God's service. God is introduced deliberating on the choice of a messenger, and the prophet is ready to go. *Alas I heard the voice of the Lord, the Father, speaking with his coequal Son and Spirit, Whom shall I send on this dangerous errand, to reprove a hardened nation, and who will go for us?* (Compare John, xii. 41. and Acts, xxviii. 25.) an evidence of the Trinity of the Persons in the unity of the Godhead. *Then said I, Here am I, send me :* Since God had purged his pollution, he is now ready to undertake any service for his glory, however difficult or dangerous. *Note ;* (1.) None can rightly speak for God, who have not a divine mission from him, and heard his voice teaching their own hearts the truths which they must deliver to others. (2.) The ordination of a

## C H A P. VII.

*Abaz, being troubled with fear of Rezin and Pekah, is comforted by Isaiah. Abaz, having liberty to choose a sign, and refusing it, hath for a sign Christ promised: his judgment is prophesied to come by Assyria.*

[Before Christ 760.]

**A**ND it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, *that* Rezin the

king of Syria, and Pekah, the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it.

2 And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.

minister is a matter of solemn weight, seeing it is (comparatively speaking) so rare to find that zeal for God, that love for men's souls, that acquaintance with the mysteries of godliness, which are such essential qualifications for a preacher of the gospel. (3.) If a desire to glorify God, and a delight to serve him in the gospel of his dear Son, do not engage us as volunteers in the service, exclusive of all worldly prospects, and regardless of all sufferings, it is a horrid profanation to offer ourselves for the ministry, merely because destined by our parents, or to procure a maintenance.

3dly, Isaiah having offered himself, his service is accepted, and his commission given him, *Go*; but he is informed, that, though to the majority it would be utterly ineffectual, to a few it would be blessed with success.

1. He is commanded to *tell this people*, now abandoned to their own hearts' lusts, *Hear ye indeed* the words of the prophets, but especially of Christ and his apostles, in reference to whose preaching this Scripture is several times quoted in the New Testament, *but understand not*, either the glories of his person, or his doctrine; *and see ye indeed* his miracles so great and strange, *but perceive not* the proof of his divine mission therein contained. *Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes*: God gives them up to judicial hardness and blindness; because they desire not the knowledge of the truth, in judgment they shall be deprived of it, and find that gospel which was ordained unto life, to them a favour of death unto death: *lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed*, to which the preaching of the word was adapted; or at least might see so far as to make some national reformation, which might avert the judgments that God had resolved to bring upon them for the rejection of his Son, which had filled up the measure of their iniquities; and therefore he left them to a reprobate mind. *Note*; (1.) The clearest truths of God's word are darkness to the fallen mind; the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (2.) Wherever the word of God is preached, it serves to harden those who receive it not in the light and love of it. (3.) They who are converted will find the wounds healed which sin had made in their souls, while the impenitent perish in their iniquities.

2. He is informed of the desolations to be accomplished upon them, in answer to his question, *How long should*

these divine judgments upon them continue? even till the whole nation should be destroyed and dispersed, the country depopulated, and utter ruin brought upon them by the Roman sword. *Note*; (1.) The ruin of men's souls is the necessary consequence of the rejection of the gospel. (2.) Temporal judgments are often the punishment of national sins.

## C H A P. VII.

*Ver. 1. And it came to pass, &c.*] The *fifth* sermon, which extends from this to the 13th chapter, is of a very mixed and various argument; partly doctrinal and redargutory, partly consolatory and prophetic. It may be divided into five parts: the first contained in this seventh chapter; the second from chap. viii. 1. to chap. ix. 7. the third from chap. ix. 7. to chap. x. 5. the fourth from chap. x. 5. to the end of that chapter; and the fifth is contained in the 11th and 12th chapters. The first part of this prophecy, which sets forth the fate of the Jewish nation with respect to the Ephraimites, Syrians, and Assyrians, contains a kind of introduction to the subsequent prophecies in this discourse. The kings of Syria and Israel (Rezin and Pekah) had conspired against Ahaz, and determined to dethrone him. Ahaz, in great straits, instead of turning to the God of his fathers, thought of applying for help to the king of Assyria. In this state of things, God commands the prophet to take his son *Shear-jashub* with him; to go and meet Ahaz, and assure him of the vain attempt, nay, of the speedy destruction of these two kings; and at the same time, to permit him to ask any sign which he should think proper of his deliverance. This he refuses, having but little confidence in God; wherefore God himself gives to the pious and true believers a sign more certain than all others,—of the birth of the Messiah, the *Inmanuel*, from a virgin; but to Ahaz, whose incredulity and hypocrisy were extremely displeasing to God, he denounces at the same time what he and his posterity should hereafter suffer from the king of Assyria, whose help he now regarded more than that of God. This is the argument of the first section of this discourse, whence we easily perceive its design, which is two-fold; first, to comfort the pious in Jerusalem, amid this great calamity which threatened their nation, and to testify the singular providence of God towards the *house of David*, which he had hitherto preserved, and would continue to preserve till the completion of his great design: and secondly, to upbraid the folly and ingratitude of Ahaz. The prophetic narration is two-fold; first, we have the occasion

of



3 Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shear-jathub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the high way of the fuller's field;

4 And say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet: fear not, neither be faint-hearted for the two tails of these smoking fire-brands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah:

5 Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying,

6 Let us go up against Judah and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, *even* the son of Tabeal:

7 Thus saith the Lord GOD, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass.

8 For the head of Syria *is* Damascus, and the head of Damascus *is* Rezin: and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people.

9 And the head of Ephraim *is* Samaria, and the head of Samaria *is* Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.

of its delivery, namely, the confederacy of the kings of Assyria and Israel, and the consternation of Ahaz and his people in consequence of it; ver. 1, 2. Secondly, the revelation made to the prophet; ver. 3. to the end: and this revelation contains a consolatory prediction respecting the disappointment of the two kings of Israel and Syria, with a *sign* of that benefit given by God himself; ver. 3—16. and a convicting prediction directed to Ahaz, in which are denounced the evils which the king of Assyria should hereafter bring upon the Jewish nation, ver. 17—25.

Ver. 3. *Then said the Lord unto Isaiah*] Isaiah is ordered, with his son **שְׁאָר־יָזָבֻב** Shear-jathub, whose name signifies *the remnant shall return*, (see chap. x. 21.) to go and meet Ahaz at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, in the high-way of the fuller's field; a place of very public resort, where the messengers of the king of Assyria had delivered their threats, (see 2 Kings, xviii. 17.) and whither it is thought Ahaz was then coming, in order to see whether he could not cut off from the enemy the waters of this pool. See 2 Chron. xxxii. 1—4. compared with ver. 30. For, as the prophet's speech to the king was not only reprehensive but consolatory, it was proper that there should be many witnesses of it; and this appears to have been the case from ver. 9. The prophet took his son with him for the consolation of the pious; that his son, to whom this name was given by the divine command, as was the case also of another of his sons, (see chap. viii. 1. 3. 18.) might be shewn to them as a kind of sacrament to the divine promises, to assure them that in the greatest calamities of the nation God would never wholly forsake his people; but that a remnant should remain at all times, whom God would, after many years, restore from banishment; and that God would through Christ his son have mercy upon all them who would believe. See Vitringa.

Ver. 4—6. *Say unto him, Take heed*] The consolatory part of this discourse, concerning the deliverance of the city, extends from this to the 17th verse: in which we have, *first*, a promise of the deliverance of Ahaz and the people of Jerusalem from the impending evil;—from this to the 10th verse. *Secondly*, A confirmation of the promise by a certain sign given to Ahaz in the name of God; ver. 10—17. The promise of deliverance contains, *first*, a consolatory declaration applied to Ahaz, to raise his

drooping mind; ver. 4—6. *Secondly*, The grounds of that consolation, namely, the disappointment of the expedition; ver. 7—9. The two kings are called, *The two tails of these smoking fire-brands*, because it is the nature of a fire-brand not long to preserve its flame, but soon to go out in smoke. These kings, therefore, are here properly and truly denoted as coming fresh from the hot counsels taken in the heat of their flagrant indignation, and carrying about with them the signs of that indignation and fury: but for the comfort of Ahaz, they were only *the tails of smoking fire-brands*, their greatest part being already consumed; these kings having in the war of the former year very much exhausted their strength, and being at this time less capable of hurting, and themselves in a short time to perish. He calls Pekah the *son of Remaliah* a private person by way of contempt. Vitringa renders the 6th verse thus, *Let us go up against Judah, and cut it in pieces, and divide it amongst us, and set up a king, &c.* Vitringa is of opinion, that *the son of Tabeal* is the name of a Syrian idol, which signifies, *the good god*; like *Rimmon*, (see 2 Kings, v. 18.) whom he imagines to be the same as Jupiter; and he is of opinion, that the design of the king of Assyria was not only to have divided the prey, but to have established the religion of his nation in Judæa.

Ver. 7—9. *Thus saith the Lord God, &c.*] We have in these verses the grounds of the consolation given to Ahaz, namely, the overthrow of this expedition; with an admonitory caution to the Jews. Vitringa renders the 8th and 9th verses, *For Damascus shall be the head only of Syria, and Rezin the head of Damascus; and within sixteen years and five Ephraim shall be broken, and be no longer a people.* Ver. 9. *And the head of Ephraim shall be Samaria, and the head of Samaria Remaliah's son.* But, in refutation of the alteration proposed in the number, Bishop Newton has the following remarks: "This prophesy was delivered in the first year of Ahaz, king of Judah, (see 2 Kings, xv. 37.) and it was to comfort him and the house of David in their difficulties and fears from the confederacy of the kings, that Isaiah was commissioned to assure him, that the kings of Syria and of Ephraim, that is to say, of Israel, should remain only the heads of their respective cities: they should not prevail against Jerusalem; and within threescore and five years Israel should be so

10 ¶ Moreover, the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying,

11 Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above.

12 But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD.

13 And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; *Is it* a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?

14 Therefore the LORD himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

15 Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.

16 For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.

“broken as to be no more a people. The learned Vitringa is of opinion, that instead of *sixty and five* it should be *sixteen and five*. Sixteen and five, as he confesses, is “an odd way of computation for one and twenty: but, “without recourse to any alteration, the thing may be “explicated otherwise: for, from the first of Ahaz, compute *sixty and five* years, in the reigns of Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Manasseh, and the end of them will fall “about the *twenty-second* year of Manasseh; when Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, made the last deportation of “the Israelites, and planted other nations in their stead, “and in the same expedition probably took Manasseh captive, and carried him to Babylon. See 2 Chron. xxxiii. “11. Ezra iv. 2. 10. 2 Kings, xvii. 24. Ephraim was “broken from being a kingdom before; but now he was “broken from being a people, and, from that time to this, “what account can be given of the people of Israel, as “distinct from the people of Judah? Where have they “subsisted all this while, or what is their condition “at present?” See Newton on the Prophecies, vol. i. p. 204. and Calmet. The meaning of the last clause in the ninth verse is, “If you do not give faith to what I “say, you shall not be confirmed; the state of your affairs, “whether political or ecclesiastical, shall not be established.” The design of the prophet was, to raise up their fainting minds to a confidence in God, rather than in the king of Assyria. See a remarkable passage parallel to this in 2 Chron. xx. It is very observable, that, though the Syrians and Ephraimites fell from their vain hopes, and did very little hurt to Judæa, yet the Assyrians, in whom the incredulous Jews had placed their hope, afflicted, spoiled, and distressed both them and their king. See 2 Chron. xxviii. 20, 21.

Ver. 10—12. *Moreover, the Lord spake, &c.*] From the 10th to the 16th verse, we have the confirmation of the promise, by a sign to Ahaz in the name of God; in which we have, *first*, the prophet’s address to Ahaz, exhorting him by the divine command to ask whatever sign he would; ver. 10, 11. with the reply of Ahaz, ver. 12. And *secondly*, a declaration of God’s good pleasure, to give an illustrious sign, which he offers rather to the true believers, than to a hypocritical and incredulous king; ver. 13—16. By a *sign* we are here to understand a *miracle*, commonly so called, or an unusual or extraordinary effect, production, or phenomenon, which cannot be explained from natural causes, but only from the omni-

potence of the ruler of the universe; which moreover signified that God was present, and ratified the word, promise, or doctrine, for which the sign was given at the petition of some public teacher or other holy man. The prophet offers this sign *either in the depth or in the height above*; signifying that all nature was subject to the power and controul of that God whom he calls the God of Ahaz, as being the God of his fathers, and in order to admonish him in whom to place his confidence. Ahaz, however, refuses to ask for a sign; not from true faith and humility, but from hypocritical reasons, as is sufficiently evident from the history of his life. See 2 Chron. xxviii. throughout. He feared lest, if such a sign should be given as he did not choose, he should be compelled to desist from his purpose, the calling in the aid of Assyria, and which he could not well do after Jehovah had given a sign to the contrary. Besides, as he seems to have been deserted by God, he dared not commit himself to that divine favour and providence which he had heretofore so proudly despised; preferring to it the protection of other and false deities. See Vitringa.

Ver. 13. *And he said, Hear ye now, &c.*] The prophet here reproves the hypocrisy of the king; and informs him, that the contempt which he shewed of the offer, was not a contempt of him, but of God. See Acts, v. 4. 1 Sam. viii. 7. Luke, x. 16.

Ver. 14. *Therefore the Lord himself, &c.*] *Therefore, &c. Behold a virgin conceives and bears a son, and she shall call, &c.* Vitringa. There can be no doubt with Christians concerning the application of this text, when they refer to Matt. i. 22, 23. where we shall have occasion to speak more largely concerning it.

Ver. 15. *Butter and honey shall he eat, &c.*] *Cream and honey shall he eat, till, &c.* The meaning of this verse is, that this child, called *Immanuel*, should be educated in the common method; the cultivated fields, unoccupied by the enemy, abundantly supplying all necessary food; and that thus he should grow up to maturity. The prophet is thought in these words to refer to the human nature of Jesus Christ. *Butter and honey*, or *milk and honey*, were a very common food of infants among the ancient Jews. See Prov. xxiv. 13. xxv. 16.

Ver. 16. *The land that thou abhorrest, &c.*] *Distressed shall be that land, whose two kings thou art afraid of, or distressed by.* The learned Vitringa seems to have proved beyond any doubt, not only the propriety of the interpretation

17 ¶ The LORD shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah; *even* the king of Assyria.

18 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the LORD shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria.

pretation given above, but also that the *child* spoken of in this verse, can be no other than he who is spoken of in the preceding verses. The connecting particle *for*, and the repetition of the words, *refusing the evil and choosing the good*, evidently demonstrate that the IMMANUEL is here meant; and, in order to enter into the immediate design of the prophet, we are to consider, that rapt, as it were, into future times, Isaiah proposes the *Immanuel*, a sign of salvation to the people of God, as if present; *Behold, a virgin conceives*—as if he understood him at this time conceived in the womb of the virgin, and shortly to be born; which is the only key to the right interpretation of this passage: and he says, that more time shall not elapse from his birth to his capability of discerning between good and evil, than from the present time to the desertion of the land of the two kings. If it be asked what interval of time is here implied:—the fourth verse of the next chapter seems to supply us with an answer: *Before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father and my mother*; which we learn from the event denotes a space somewhat less than three years. See Vitringa on the place, and his Observations, lib. v. cap. 11. Dr. Kennicott differs from Vitringa, and, after some other celebrated writers, conceives that in this and the two foregoing verses we have a two-fold prophecy; the former part referring to the Messiah, the latter to the son of Isaiah; and he would translate and paraphrase it thus: ver. 14. *Nevertheless, the Lord himself will give to you a sign: God is mindful of his promise to your father, O house of David, and will fulfil the same in a wonderful manner: Behold, the virgin,—that one only woman who was to conceive whilst a virgin, shall conceive, and bear a son; who shall be called—that is to say, in Scripture language, who shall be, IMMANUEL. “God with us.” But this great personage, this God visible among men, introduced into the world thus in a manner which is without example, shall yet be truly man. He shall be born an infant, and as an infant shall he be brought up; For, ver. 15. butter and honey [rather, milk and honey,] shall he eat: He shall be fed with the common food of infants, which in the East was milk mixed with honey,—till he shall grow up to know how to refuse the evil, and choose the good.* Here then we find a comprehensive description of the *Messiah*: his divinity is marked by his being God; his residence upon earth as being *God with us*; and his humanity by his being born of a woman, and fed with the usual food of infants during his infant state. Now the 16th verse I conceive contains the second prophecy, which should be thus rendered; *But before this child [pointing to his own son] shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that THOU abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.* Now that this verse contains a distinct prophecy appears from hence; *First*, the words preceding have been proved to be confined to the Messiah, whose birth was then distant above seven hundred years; whereas the words

here are confined to some child who was not to arrive at years of discretion before the kings then advancing against Jerusalem should be themselves cut off. *Secondly*, Some end was undoubtedly to be answered by the presence of Isaiah's son, whom God commanded the prophet to take with him on this visit to Ahaz; and yet no use at all appears to have been made of this son, unless he be referred to in this sentence: And *Thirdly*, These prophecies are manifestly distinguished by being addressed to different persons. The first, plural, and addressed to *the house of David*, for the consolation of the pious in general; as it assured them not only of the preservation of that house, but of God's fidelity to his great promise: whereas the second prophecy is singular, and therefore addressed to the king in particular, as it foretold the speedy destruction of the two kings, his enemies. See Kennicott's Sermon on the text.

*Ver. 17. The Lord shall bring upon thee]* *The Lord [however] will bring, &c.* Though the prophet in the name of God gives Ahaz and the people certain assurance of a deliverance from their present evil; yet, as Ahaz chose rather to confide in the king of Assyria than in the Lord of Hosts, the wretched consequences of that confidence are here set forth, from this verse to the end of the chapter; namely, the devastation and ruin which they should bring upon the land of Judah.

*Ver. 18. The Lord shall hiss for the fly, &c.]* See the note on chap. v. 26. It is not very strange, that languages should abound with figures and metaphors, or that prophecies should contain parables and apt similitudes. What man, who knows any thing of language or letters, would expect otherwise? However, considering that the word *hiss* is apt to carry with it a low idea, one might wish that our translators had chosen a less offensive word, which might but tolerably have expressed the sense. Besides, the word *hiss* seems not proper, as not well answering to the original word שָׁרַק *sharak*: for, whether we suppose the metaphor taken from a shepherd's calling to his sheep, or from a bee-keeper's calling to his bees, *hiss* is not a proper expression for either. Other words, more expressive of the metaphor, might be thought on were it necessary to follow the figure; but I see no reason for such scrupulous exactness. The general word, *call*, would fully express the meaning; and that is sufficient in such cases. Our older translations, as Coverdale's in 1535, and Mathews's of 1537, and the great Bible of 1539, have it *call unto them* in this place, and I think very wisely. The Geneva translators of 1560 first brought in *hiss unto them*: and they have been followed by Parker's Bible, and by our last translation. I commend not the older translations for having *whistle* in this place, and *blow for them* in Zech. x. 8. The same word *call* would have served better in both these and the other place before referred to. I observe that the Hebrew word קָרָא *kara*, is made use of in the 13th chapter ver.,

19 And they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all bushes.

20 In the same day shall the LORD shave with a razor that is hired, *namely*, by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria, the head, and the hair of the feet: and it shall also consume the beard.

21 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* a man shall nourish a young cow and two sheep;

22 And it shall come to pass, for the abundance of milk *that* they shall give, that he shall eat butter: for butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the land.

23 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* every place shall be, where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings, it shall *even* be for briers and thorns.

24 With arrows and with bows shall *men* come thither; because all the land shall become briers and thorns.

25 And *on* all hills that shall be digged with

ver. 3. to the same sense, and for the same purpose, as שָׁרַק *sharak* here, and is there literally rendered *call*: and so might this other word be rendered also without any impropriety. Some indeed have chosen *whisper* instead of *bids*; which is a word of more dignity: but it dilutes and diminishes the sense. A loud or shrill call seems to be intended in all the three places; for neither do shepherds *whisper* to their sheep, nor bee-keepers to their bees. In short then, I know no better English word than *call* to preserve the sense, and at the same time to keep up the dignity of expression. The true and full meaning of the two places in this book, is neither more nor less than this; that God, having sovereign command over all nations and people, can convene them together from remote and distant quarters to execute his most righteous judgments. Whenever God gives the signal, or issues out his summons, they will advance with all alacrity to perform his will, though not knowing that his hand is in it. The *fly* and the *bee*, in the place before us, denote the Egyptian and Assyrian armies, which should come up with speed from their respective quarters, to execute the divine vengeance upon Palestine for their flagrant iniquities. The former would come swiftly upon them, like swarms of devouring *flies*, to infest and annoy them, and to exhaust their blood and juices: and the latter should approach as swarms of angry bees or wasps to sting them to death. Such is the prophet's meaning, veiled under elegant figures; which give new life and strength to his expressions, and render the whole the more poignant and more affecting. See Waterland's Scripture vindicated, part iii. p. 42.

Ver. 19. *In the desolate valleys, &c.*] *In the waste valleys, and in the holes of the rock, and upon all thorny grounds, and upon all the well-watered places.* Schultens.

Ver. 20. *Shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired, &c.*] *Shall the Lord shave with that mercenary razor by them beyond the Euphrates, &c.—And even the beard also shall be close shaven.* Schultens. The metaphor of a razor is immediately explained by the prophet, who calls the king of Assyria, emphatically, *that mercenary razor*, alluding to the hire which Ahaz offered to him for his service. See 2 Chron. xxviii. 16. 20, 21. We have a full completion of this prophesy in the desolation of the land by Nebuchadnezzar. Read 2 Kings, xxiv. 10—16.

Ver. 21, 22. *And it shall come to pass*] The prophet intends here to denote the extreme desertion of the land,

and in consequence the great growth of the grass and food, which there shall not be sufficient cattle to eat. Certainly, therefore, the few men remaining might themselves eat the fat of the land, when there were scarcely any to share with them, and none to purchase of them. The subsequent verses set forth in strong terms the desolation of the land.

Ver. 23. *Every place shall be, &c.*] *Every vineyard that hath a thousand vines, valued at a thousand pieces of silver, shall become in that day briers and thorns.* Lowth.

Ver. 25. *And on all hills*] *And as to all the hills which used to be dressed with a mattock, there shall no fence of briers and thorns come there; but it shall let in oxen, and shall be trodden by the lesser cattle.* Vitringa. It was usual in Judæa to fence in their vineyards with briers and thorns.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, A new prophesy begins in this chapter, which bears date in the reign of Ahaz, when the confederate forces of Syria and Israel, which had before committed great ravages and massacres in the country, 2 Kings, xv. 37. 2 Chron. xxviii. 5—7. united to besiege Jerusalem the capital, and utterly to destroy the kingdom of Judah; though, by divine interposition, their design was defeated.

1. This formidable invasion put the king and his subjects into great confusion. *It was told the house of David*, of which though Ahaz was a degenerate branch, yet for his father's sake he was not entirely forsaken, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim; and before two such potent monarchs, whose power separately he had been unable to cope with, nothing but ruin seemed approaching; and his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind, weak, bending, disordered, and ready to fall before these mighty foes. Note, They who have accusing guilt on their consciences, are in terrors at the approach of danger.

2. God sends to comfort and encourage them. Though perplexed, they need not be in despair; Isaiah, the messenger of warning to them, is now the messenger of mercy, little as they deserved it, to prove them, whether the goodness of God might lead them to repentance. He is commanded to go with his son, (whose significant name carried in it a token for good,) and meet Ahaz at the conduit of the upper pool, in the high way of the fuller's field, where probably he was making some preparations for the approaching

the mattock, there shall not come thither the fear of briars and thorns: but it shall be for

the sending forth of oxen, and for the treading of lesser cattle.

proaching siege, by fortifying his capital, introducing plenty of water into the city, or cutting it off from supplying the besiegers. *Note*: (1.) God is thinking of sinners, and preventing them with the blessings of his grace, when he is not in all their thoughts. (2.) Seasonable relief in time of helpless distress, is doubly welcome. The message with which the prophet is sent, is most encouraging.

(1.) He bids them not to be afraid of foes so despicable. Though to human view so potent, in God's regard they were but as the tails of firebrands when they are burnt out, and their wrath was no more to be regarded than the smoke of an extinguished taper. *Take heed, and be quiet, beware only of unbelieving distrust, and wait in confident expectation of the salvation of God; neither be faint-hearted, or be not soft as wax, melted before the sun.* *Note*: (1.) Nothing lays the soul so open to the inroads of sin, as unbelieving fear. (2.) The greatest dangers will not disturb their peace, whose minds are stayed upon God. (3.) The enemies of God's people are raging as fire-brands, but all their wicked purposes will end in smoke.

(2.) He foretels the disappointment of the present attempt, though the schemes of the enemies of Judah were deep laid, and full of malice, designing nothing less than the ravaging of the whole country, dethroning the king, and setting up a tributary of their own: and so secure were they of success, that they had fixed on the person already, had taken the city in imagination, and divided the spoil; yet one word of God defeats the plan: *It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass.* He who sets bounds to the sea, can as easily still the ragings of the mighty. *Note*: (1.) The sinner's confidence serves but to increase the confusion of his disappointment. (2.) They who are purposing to vex others, find often the mischief return on their own heads. (3.) God delights to humble the proud. They shall see whose word shall stand.

(3.) From the present defeat he passes on to the future destiny of these enemies of Judah. Far from being able to extend their territories, their kingdoms should never be enlarged; and Ephraim, perhaps the most inveterate of the two, within sixty-five years, cease to be a people.

4. The men of Judah are enjoined to credit his message; *for if ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established*; faith in the divine promise was that which could alone abidingly secure their safety, whatever temporary deliverances might be granted to them. *Note*: The word of promise only brings comfort, when it is mixed with faith in them that hear it.

2dly, To confirm by miracle the veracity of the prophetic word, Isaiah,

1. Bids Ahaz ask a sign of the Lord his God; for, though he was a wicked king, God had not yet cast off his national relation to him and his people, and was ready to grant him every evidence to engage his trust and dependance.

2. Ahaz wickedly rejects the offer, pretending piety; but there could be no fear of tempting God in asking a sign, when himself had made the offer: the true reason seems to be, he was unwilling to be quiet, and trust the

case with God, expecting more from the help of the Assyrians and his own fortifications, than from the word of promise.

3. The prophet rebukes the high affront herein shown, not to himself merely as a prophet, but more especially to that God who sent him. And since he disdains to ask a sign, God will give him one strange and marvellous; a sign which relates in a double respect to the present and eternal good of his people. *Behold a strange unheard-of wonder, a virgin shall conceive without the knowledge of man, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel, God with us: in our nature, conceived of a virgin, by the power of the Holy Ghost, that he might have the human nature pure from our original defilement, and add infinite dignity thereunto, by uniting it to the divine nature in that mysterious person God and man in one Christ. Butter and honey shall he eat, partaking of a real human nature, supported by food as we are, and growing to maturity of understanding, by progressive steps, that he may know, or until he shall know, to refuse the evil, and choose the good.* Now this was a sign of present deliverance for Judah, as well as future safety; since, till the time of the coming of this wonderful personage, the sceptre should not depart finally from them; and for their more immediate comfort it is added, *Before this child, probably pointing to Shearjashub his little son, or before the child, that is to be born, shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, shall come to the exercise of reason, the land that thou abhorrest, of Syria and Israel, now confederate, shall be forsaken of both her kings, Pekah and Rezin; which was quickly fulfilled in the death of Rezin, slain by the king of Assyria, 2 Kings, xvi. 9. and Pekah by Hoshea, 2 Kings, xv. 30.* *Note*: (1.) Insults cast on God's prophets, is insolence against himself, and will be highly repented by him. (2.) The great comfort in every distress, is not so much the hope of present deliverance, as the prospect of eternal blessedness in our Immanuel. (3.) The more we examine the word of prophecy, the more confirmed shall we be in the faith of Jesus, in whom it is so perfectly fulfilled.

3dly, Though God will now appear for Zion's sake, let not Ahaz think his unbelief shall go unpunished.

1. A fore judgment is threatened, such as the land of Judah never knew before, since the grand revolt of the ten tribes. *Note*: Though God may have long patience, the impenitent must not promise themselves impunity.

2. The instrument to be employed was chiefly the king of Assyria, Nebuchadnezzar; and Pharaoh-Nechoh, the king of Egypt, helped forward their destruction, 2 Kings, xxiii. 29—35. Swiftly would their armies come up at the call of God, thick as swarms of bees and flies, resting in the desolate valleys like flights of locusts: not a green leaf should be left, so thoroughly would they devour the land, and climb every fortress, though seated on the craggy rocks. As a sharp razor, passing from head to foot, shaves off the hair, so should the king of Assyria make an entire conquest of Judæa, receiving the spoil as his hire: or it alludes to the present which Ahaz sent him to engage his assistance, 2 Kings, xvi. 7—9. which in the end turned to his

## C H A P. VIII.

*In Maher-shalal-hash-baz, he propheseth that Syria and Israel shall be subdued by Assyria; and Judah likewise for their infidelity. God's judgments shall be irresistible. Comfort shall be to them that fear God; great afflictions to idolaters.*

[Before Christ 760.]

**M**OREOVER, the LORD said unto me, Take thee a great roll, and write in it with a man's pen concerning Maher-shalal-hash-baz.

2 And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah.

3 And I went unto the prophets; and she conceived, and bare a son. Then said the

LORD to me, Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz.

4 For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria.

5 ¶ The LORD spake also unto me again, saying,

6 Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah, that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son;

7 Now therefore, behold, the LORD bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong, and many, *even* the king of Assyria, and all

his own damage, and brought upon him the continual inroads of the Assyrians, till the fatal captivity arrived. *Note*; (1.) When God would chastise a guilty nation, he will not want a scourge. (2.) It is just in God to make that creature the instrument of our vexation which we have made the object of our confidence, and to let men see thereby the misery as well as folly of changing a rock for a reed.

3. Terrible would be the consequence of these invasions: instead of lowing herds and grazing flocks, a man would think himself happy if he had one young cow and two poor sheep remaining. So desolate would every family be, and such plenty of pasture in the depopulated country, that this small flock of cattle would yield milk sufficient: butter and honey would be their only diet, for meat could not be afforded in the scarcity of beasts which remained; and vineyards and tillage would be utterly neglected: the spot which paid a yearly rent of a thousand silverlings (about the value of half a crown) for a thousand vines, so fruitful were they, now overgrown with briars and thorns, yielded no revenue. Instead of gathering their vintage, men must now go armed to protect themselves from the wild beasts or robbers that lodged in those thickets where fruitful vineyards grew: and the hills and fields untilled, where once the rising harvest stood, now, no longer fenced with hedges of thorns, are laid quite open as a wild waste, where the cattle roamed without controul. How terrible are the desolations which sin, and war the effect of it, make in the earth? What sinful nation need not tremble on beholding Judaea's wretched fate, and read an alarming call to repentance in her overthrow?

## C H A P. VIII.

*Ver. 1. Moreover, the Lord said*] The other section of this discourse, which reaches to the 7th verse of the next chapter, is nearly of the same argument with that preceding: it is prophetic, and contains matter of comfort and reproof. It may be divided into two parts; the first part, in the four first verses, contains a confirmation and a sign of the promise concerning the sudden subversion of the kingdoms of Syria and Ephraim. The first part more

fully and distinctly explains the purpose of God, with respect both to the Israelites and the Jews, for the consolation of the pious, and the terror of the impious and carnal Jews; and it contains, *first*, a prophetic enarration of the events which should happen in the times immediately preceding those of the Messiah, from ver. 5. to 11. *Secondly*, a redargutory, as well as prophetic instruction, in which the prophet teaches the people by his own example, as one immediately taught by God, with what dispositions they should receive all the attempts of their enemies to subvert the kingdom of God in their land, even to the time of the manifestation of Christ; and this instruction contains a repeated prophecy concerning Jesus, most certainly to be manifested for the consolation of the righteous, as a public teacher: ver. 11. to ch. ix. 7. See Vitringa, who leaves out the word *concerning* in this verse.

*Ver. 2. And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record*] These witnesses were called in to sign the instrument or writing wherein Isaiah, according to God's command, was to write the name mentioned in the preceding verse. It is not to be supposed that they were witnesses of a new marriage, as there are no indications thereof, and as it is plain from the preceding chapter, ver. 3. that Isaiah was married. This instrument was to be signed, and preserved as a public testimony to the time and manner of the delivery of this prophecy, and consequently to its truth and divinity. Isaiah's wife might be called a *prophetess*, as being the wife of a prophet; or possibly she herself might be endued with the gift of prophecy.

*Ver. 3. And I went unto the prophets*] *And I had gone unto the prophets, and she had conceived; and she bare a son; and the Lord said unto me, &c.* Vitringa.

*Ver. 5. The Lord spake also*] After having delivered the promise concerning the deliverance of the people from the fear of the two adverse kingdoms, God, by a new, or a continued revelation, (for it was not very distant in time from the former) more distinctly unfolds his purpose concerning the fate not only of Israel, but of Judah, and confirms what in the former prophecy he had advised the prophet concerning them. See ch. vii. 17, &c. For this is of nearly the same argument, except that it is more extensive,

his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks:

8 And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach *even* to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.

9 ¶ Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves,

and ye shall be broken in pieces.

10 Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God *is* with us.

11 ¶ For the LORD spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying,

12 Say ye not, A confederacy, to all *them* to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid.

tensive, and involves many more mysteries: the first part is entirely prophetic, from this to the 11th verse, and contains a declaration of the events of the subsequent period, immediately leading to the time of fulfilling the promise respecting *Immanuel*: of these events the first is the subversion of Ephraim, ver. 6, 7.; the second, the affliction of Judah by the Assyrians also; ver. 8.; the third, the destruction of the hostile counsels and attempts of future times, which seemed to threaten a total excision of the church of God, ver. 9, 10. To this prediction the reason is added which moved God not only to punish the Ephraimites, but also the Jews, by the Assyrians, ver. 6. *The waters of Shiloah*, according to some, mean the kingdom of David; but Vitringa is of opinion, that the expression here means the kingdom of God among the people of the Jews, as it was manifest in the kingdom of the house of David, as in the next verse the kingdom of Assyria is signified by the *river Euphrates*. For the waters of Shiloah, flowing from the bottom of mount Sion, which was sacred to God, and the seat of his kingdom hereby represented the kingdom of God. They flowed too from a perennial fountain, and hereby well denoted that eternal kingdom which was promised to David and his seed; and they are said to *flow softly*, gently, silently; hereby properly denoting that kingdom which is internal and spiritual, and which *cometh not with observation*. On account of this kingdom, Judah was chosen and established a people; and it was singly from the want of faith in this kingdom, that they ever sought for support and assistance from the kings of the earth, who were always to them like the staff of a broken reed; for God alone was their king, and in him alone, and his sure promise, was their true confidence.

*Ver. 8. And he shall pass through Judah*] The meaning is, that the Assyrian, after he had swallowed up Syria, and then the kingdom of Ephraim, should pass into Judah, and occupy with his forces the whole of it, except Jerusalem, its metropolis; which refers to the time of Sennacherib. See 2 Kings, xviii. 13, 14. The reader will observe, that in this and the preceding verses, the ideas are taken from the overflowing of the river Euphrates except that in the latter a new metaphor is introduced where the *spreading of the wings* alludes to the wings of Sennacherib's army. See Dan. ix. 17.

*Ver. 9, 10. Associate yourselves, &c.*] Rapt as it were into extacy, upon considering the land as belonging to *Immanuel*, the prophet beholds the future assistance which

should be given to that land, and the vanity of all attempts utterly to destroy the kingdom of David. His address to the confederate nations is most elegant and spirited; and the foundation of his confidence is finely expressed at the end of the 10th verse, where he himself interprets the name before given to the Messiah, *For God is with us*. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 11. For the Lord spake thus*] In the subsequent part of this sermon, the prophet sets forth with what disposition of mind those worldly events are to be received, which threaten destruction to the church: he renews, for the comfort of the pious, the great promise of the Messiah, and denounces the most grievous judgments, spiritual and temporal, upon the impious, incredulous, and profane. We have, *first*, a reproof of the depraved and improper disposition of the carnal and profane men among the Jews towards God and his providence, ver. 11, 12. *Secondly*, advice concerning a proper disposition towards God, a sound judgment of his ways, and our necessary duty in doubtful cases, ver. 13. And, *thirdly*, a prophetic declaration of the tremendous judgment of God, which would be manifested towards men of either disposition in the time of the Messiah; for the consolation and salvation of the good, though few, and for the destruction of the evil: ver. 14. to ch. ix. 7. *With a strong hand*, in this verse, is rendered in the Chaldee, *In the strength of prophecy*: it seems to refer to those extacies wherein the prophets were frequently rapt. See Ezek. i 3. and Jer. xv. 17. The prophet observed, that his former prophecy was received by many with admiration; it promised safety and deliverance to the people, when all things appeared desperate: he therefore thinks proper to explain the reason upon which he had spoken so confidently respecting these things; and at the same time sets forth such other matters as refer to this prophecy; namely, that God, while the prophet himself was rather inclined to fear amid such great dangers, and began to hesitate in his mind, laid hold of him with a strong hand, restrained him in his office, and efficaciously persuaded him not to fear that which was not to be feared, like a carnal people void of all confidence in God; that he should not suffer himself to be terrified with the name or the reality of a confederacy between two associated kings, a confederacy which raised so much terror in the mind of an unbelieving and fearful people; but that he should regard Jehovah only, by whose favour or wrath the state of this people was to be estimated. See Vitringa.

13 Sanctify the LORD of Hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

14 And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

15 And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

16 Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

17 And I will wait upon the LORD, that

hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.

18 Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel; from the LORD of Hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.

19 And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards, that peep and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?

20 To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

*Ver. 13. Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself]* The Lord of Hosts, him shall ye sanctify, &c. The duty opposite to the vice of the Jewish people is here set forth, Sanctify the Lord; that is to say, so worship and reverence him, as to attribute to him all that glory which properly belongs to him. See Numb. xx. 12. Deut. xxxii. 51. and ch. xxix. 23. of this book. Perhaps the word sanctify in this place contains a more sublime sense; leading us to understand, that he gives the greatest honour to God, who acknowledges him not only able to protect his people against all worldly power, but also to perform, and about to perform to the whole believing world, that spiritual deliverance in his Son, figured out by every other deliverance, the basis and foundation of every other, and the promise of which was wrapped up in the name Immanuel. He who believes God in this great promise, will never distrust him in lesser ones: and to this what follows has an immediate respect.

*Ver. 14, 15. And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone]* We have here, in this third part of the present discourse, first, a prophetic denunciation of the judgment to be displayed in the time of the Messiah, both upon the pious and the impious,—in these verses. Secondly, an exposition of that judgment, in the manner of a dialogue between two persons; God, and a certain illustrious teacher: the former explaining his design concerning the disciples of the latter; the latter assenting to that design, and explaining it, ver. 16—18. Thirdly, a prophetic exhortation subjoined, directed to the Jews, to receive the doctrine of God and his Messiah, with a prediction of the evils which should follow a rejection of this doctrine, ver. 19—22. Fourthly, a more plain and full description of this great Teacher, the Messiah, with many of his attributes, ch. ix. 1—7. In the verses before us, we have a prophetic denunciation of the two-fold judgment in the time of the Messiah. The subject of the discourse, which is not mentioned, must either be the Lord of Hosts, mentioned in the preceding verse, or Immanuel, mentioned in the 8th. The writers of the New Testament, who have so frequently quoted this passage, prove beyond all controversy, that the subject of it is the Mes-

siah; the Lord Jesus Christ, God over all, blessed for ever; and in whose humanity Jehovah dwelt, and performed for his people all those benefits of grace which the extent of this promise implies, in which it is said that he should be for a sanctuary; and who at the same time became to the hypocrites and unbelievers in Judæa, a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, to the destruction of the far greater part of that people. See ch. xxviii. 13.

*Ver. 16. Bind up the testimony]* Engrave the testimony, seal up the law in my disciples. There seems no doubt that the person here introduced speaking is God the Father, in whose will the Messiah immediately after professeth his acquiescence. The testimony and law, mean the doctrine and the law of the Messiah, at which many should be offended; and the words are frequently used in the prophets and the sacred writers for the doctrine of Christ. The engraving or sealing of this in men, is that efficacious operation of Christ and his Spirit, whereby men are brought to a belief of, and an obedience to the word of truth written in their hearts. See Jer. xxxi. 33. 2 Cor. iii. 3. and 1 Cor. i. 6. in which last passage the apostle seems to have had his eye on these words of Isaiah, as also in 2 Cor. i. 22. and Ephes. iv. 30.

*Ver. 17, 18. And I will wait, &c.]* These words belong to the Messiah. The Messiah here answers God the Father, that he perfectly acquiesces in his counsel, waiting with confidence reposed in him for the completion of those great promises which were made to him by the Father, as well as those in ch. xlix. 1—3. though God hid his face from the greater part of the rebellious and unbelieving Jews. The children, mentioned ver. 18. are generally thought to refer to the apostles, and first disciples of Christ, who were indeed for signs and for wonders in Israel. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 19, 20. And when they shall say]* Here follows the address of the prophet to the Jewish nation, drawn from the argument of the preceding prophecy,—to the first verse of the 9th chapter; and then a remarkable illustration of the prophecy concerning Jehovah the teacher, who was hereafter to appear to the Jews,—from ver. 2. to 7. The connection



21 And they shall pass through it hardly beset and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall

fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward.

22 And they shall look unto the earth;

connection is this: the prophet having foretold the coming of the Messiah, and the disciples which he would have, takes this occasion of addressing the Jews, and reminding them of their duty, as he had done, ch. ii. 6. compared with ver. 1, 2. where he first delivers that memorable prophecy concerning Jehovah, or Messiah, the teacher. He saw the nation in his time most propense to foreign superstitions, particularly to the divinations, soothsayings, and astrology of the Syrians, Egyptians, &c. ch. ii. 6. but not regarding the pure instructions of God as they ought: he therefore warns them against placing any dependance on such follies and absurdities, and exhorts them to disregard all merely human teaching and assistance, while they applied solely to the divine law and testimony. See Vitranga. Instead of *it is because*, &c. ver. 20. we may read, *whoever it be*, to him shall there be no morning: that is to say, "Upon them Christ, the light of the world, shall not arise." See Hosea, ch. vi. 1.

Ver. 21, 22. *And they shall pass through it*] The attentive reader must observe, that the 21st verse is connected with the last clause of the preceding one; *no light, no morning to them*. The prophet had here denounced to those who should despise the institution of God and the Messiah, a great evil, that they should have no part in the true light and consolation which the Messiah should bring to his people, according to the ancient prophecies, nor even in the resurrection of the just to life. On the contrary, they should be in dire and thick darkness, excluded from the communion of God and the saints, and should be oppressed with evils and calamities of every kind, by which they should be driven to extreme necessity and desperation, joined with final destruction. This is the argument of the present period, the expressions in which are very emphatical; nor could the highest desperation be painted in more lively colours than in these words, which are stronger than in the parallel passage, ch. v. 30. though that is equally sublime and efficacious. This prophecy was most strikingly fulfilled in the last times of the Jewish polity, before its final destruction by the Romans. The following passages will serve greatly to explain the prophet, Luke, xxi. 23—25. Rev. xvi. 11. 21. Michaelis observes, that nothing can afford the human mind such a picture of horror, as that of a man blaspheming God, with his eyes lifted up to heaven, the thunder interrupting his execrations, and succeeded by the darkest night; for the passage might be rendered, "He shall pass through the land, having suffered the greatest tortures, but still apprehending greater; and as he trembles, he shall grow angry, and shall curse his God and King, [i. e. the Messiah] and look upward. Towards the earth it shall thunder, and behold, trouble, darkness, dimness of anguish, and darkness which might be felt." The impostor Mahomet makes use of the same image in Surat. ch. ii. 16. 19. which throws much light on this passage. See Michaelis's notes, and Vitranga.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The destruction of Damascus and Samaria is here threatened, and the rod of warning shaken over Judah.

1. The prophet is commanded to write this, with the four following chapters, on a large roll; and, as a title, to inscribe on it *Mahe-shalal-hash-baz, hasten to the spoil, hasten to the prey*; an invitation to the king of Assyria, and repeated to shew the certainty of the event. *Note*; It is an unspeakable mercy that the holy Scriptures are committed to writing, and not handed down to us by uncertain tradition.

2. The prophet, having obeyed the divine injunction, gets it attested by two credible witnesses, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah, probably a Levite, 2 Chron. xxix. 13. that when the event should correspond with the prediction, his divine mission might incontestably appear.

3. On the conception of the prophets his wife, so called from her relation to him, and the birth of a second son; to engage greater attention to the prophecy, he by divine command gives the child the same name as was inscribed on the roll. The design of which,

4. He explains; that before the infant could speak plainly, Damascus and Samaria should be spoiled by the Assyrian king; which was fulfilled, 2 Kings, xvi. 9. xvii. 3. and more fully xviii. 9, 10. *Note*; (1.) War is God's scourge over guilty lands. (2.) They who have been troublers of other's repose, are justly doomed to suffer in return.

5. Judah also shall not go unpunished, because many of the faithless Jews despised the waters of Shiloah that go softly—the gentle government of David's race, or the weakness of their kingdom, eclipsed by the greater dominions of Rezin and Pekah, whom, though avowed enemies, these traitors of their country applauded and honoured. Therefore, to punish them, the Assyrian king, like a flood rapid and resistless, with his armies should cover the land, reaching to the neck, even to Jerusalem the metropolis, 2 Kings, xviii. 13—17. and, spreading his wings, should fill the breadth of Immanuel's land; so called, because there he should in the fulness of time be born, live, and die. *Note*; (1.) To affect the fashions, admire the manners and government of our inveterate enemies, and to despise our own, betrays a heart destitute of the love of our country. (2.) Though the waters of trouble reach to the neck, yet even then can God say, Here shall thy proud waves be stayed, and save us out of the floods, when we most despair of ourselves.

2dly, In Judah's distressed case the prophet encourages and instructs them,

1. With a promise of their enemies' disappointment and defeat: though strongly confederate, the expedition deeply planned, and the troops well armed and ready for the battle, they shall be broken to pieces. This is repeated, to shew the certainty of the event, and the vanity of their enemies' hopes of success; when God should inebriate their

and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness.

their councils, and Immanuel defend his own land. *Note;* (1.) Though power and policy unite to crush the church of Christ, their efforts will prove the confusion of her enemies. (2.) God's promise is sure, and they who trust it will never be disappointed. (3.) If God be with us and for us, we need neither fear nor care who are against us.

2. He directs them how to speak and act in their present situation. *The Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand, in the spirit of prophesy, not to walk in the way of this people, dejected with their fears, or flying with them to Assyria for help against their invaders, Pekah and Rezin, saying, Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; join not in the general cry for a foreign aid, or in any factious party at home; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid on account of the confederate armies of Syria and Israel. Sanctify the Lord God of Hosts, by your professed dependance upon, and subjection to him, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread, who is the only worthy object. And he shall be for a sanctuary; a sure protection to those who trust him in every time of trial and distress. Note;* (1.) In time of danger good men need divine encouragement against their fears. (2.) They who would follow Christ, must renounce the ways of a wicked world; a holy singularity is the inseparable badge of a holy conversation. (3.) In whatever difficulties we are involved, let us never use undue means for relief. (4.) The fear of God upon the heart, will preserve us from being terrified with the threatenings of men. (5.) God is sanctified, when by patient resignation we are content to wait for his salvation.

3. He threatens with ruin those who continued rebellious; if they would not trust God as their sanctuary, they should find him, a stone of stumbling, and rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, and for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; which was soon verified in the destruction which the king of Assyria, at God's command, brought upon them; and has a farther reference to the day of Christ, when, offended at the Lord Jesus, his character, birth, disciples, &c. the Jews, unable to reconcile it to their proud expectations of a conquering Messiah, rejected him, many among them stumbled and fell, and were broken, and snared, and taken, as was here predicted, and thereby perished under their unbelief and hardness of heart. *Note;* The same Jesus who is a sanctuary to the poor and helpless sinner, to the proud and self-righteous is still a stone of stumbling; they will not renounce themselves to trust in him, and therefore perish in their iniquities.

3dly, We have,

1. The command given to the prophet. *Bind up the testimony;* the prophetic word concerning the Messiah, more precious than bags of gold, to be preserved for futurity; *seal the law among my disciples;* the disciples of Christ, to whom the law of the Spirit of life was intrusted, and, though a sealed book to others, revealed to them, and transmitted faithfully to their successors. *Note;* (1.) We can never be thankful enough for the inestimable treasure

of God's word. (2.) Till God opens our understanding to understand the Scriptures, they are a book sealed, and a gospel hid.

2. The prophet professes his earnest expectation and hope. *I will wait upon the Lord, the Redeemer of his people, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, either in frowns of displeasure, or as being yet hid from them, until his glorious manifestation in the flesh; and I will look for him, in confidence of his coming, and in joyful hope of the blessed issue of his appearing. Note;* (1.) Patient waiting upon God will never be disappointed. (2.) When God hides his face, we must not think that he has forsaken us for ever, but be stirred up to pray, Lift up again upon us the light of thy countenance.

3. Christ, in answer to the prophet's expectation, appears to cheer and comfort him; of whom the words seem rather spoken than of the prophet himself and his two sons, though they were probably types of Christ and his people, for to him the words are expressly ascribed, Heb. ii. 13. *Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given me:* but the world knoweth them not, because it knew him not; they are for signs, and for wonders in Israel; signs and wonders were wrought by them, yet Israel would not believe; yea, derided and reviled them; and still they continue in the world a people every where spoken against, and bearing the reproach of the cross; *from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion, who freely gave his Son for us. Note;* (1.) The relation between a minister, and those who are begotten by him in the Gospel, is as near and dear as between the parent and his natural offspring. (2.) We must not be ashamed of the reproach of Christ; nor, however strange the men of the world may think us, join with them in their ways.

4. Christ cautions his disciples to beware of deceivers, and to keep close to the word of revelation: primarily it may refer to the Jews, who in their distresses were readier to recur to any help than to God, 2 Kings, i. 2. but it contains also a warning against the false doctrines of the scribes and Pharisees, whose principles and practices were as contrary to God as those of wizards; them, therefore, it were folly to consult: *should not a people seek unto their God, who can give a satisfactory answer to the questions of the guilty, and the cries of the distressed soul? it were highly absurd for the living to apply to the dead; to images, or necromancers, or the scribes and Pharisees, and all like them, who, though pretending to teach others, are themselves dead in trespasses and sins. To the law and to the testimony;* the Scriptures, which are the only tests of truth: *if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them;* they are blind leaders of the blind. *Note;* (1.) The superstitious folly of many professed Christians, who trust in charms and fortune-tellers, and the like, is as scandalous as sinful. (2.) If God be our God, we may always seek, and always find help in him in every trial. (3.) The more we examine the Bible for ourselves, the less liable shall we be to be deceived. (4.) No doctrine is to be received as genuine, which has not Scripture proof to

## C H A P. IX.

*What joy shall be in the midst of afflictions, by the kingdom and birth of Christ. The judgments upon Israel for their pride, for their hypocrisy, and for their impenitency.*

[Before Christ 740.]

**N**EVERTHELESS the dimness shall not be such as *was* in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict *her* by the

way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.

2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

3 Thou hast multiplied the nation, *and* not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, *and* as *men* rejoice when they divide the spoil.

to support it. (5.) A minister whose own soul has never felt the enlivening influences of God's word and Spirit, can scarcely be expected to guide others aright in the way to glory; the living might as soon expect instruction from the dead, as the soul edification from such.

5. The doom of the wicked is read, who forsake God for familiar spirits, the truth for falsehood. *And they shall pass through it* (the land) *hardly beset and hungry*; when in their captivity, they should scarce have bread to support their miserable lives, and with madness and vexation under their calamities blaspheme God and their king Messiah, and look upwards in vain for help from their false Christ, having rejected the true Redeemer: wherever they turned their eyes, darkness, distress, and wretchedness should appear, till a miserable life should close in a more miserable death; which was fully verified in the judgments brought on the Jews by the Roman sword. *Note*: (1.) The unhumbled fret and kick against the pricks; but they only thereby aggravate their own sufferings. (2.) God's judgments upon hardened sinners, instead of bringing them to repentance, provoke their blasphemies. (3.) They who forsake the God of their mercies, find in death all their prospects terminated with darkness and despair.

## C H A P. IX.

*Ver. 1, 2. Nevertheless the dimness, &c.]* The prophet having said, in the 20th verse of the preceding chapter, that they who directed not themselves according to the canon of the divine law should have *no light*; two things were involved in his discourse: The first, that there would be very many among the Jews, to whom the Messiah, arising with his new light, would be an offence; who would reject his salutary doctrine, and should therefore fall into the most grievous calamities, and thick darkness. And secondly, that there would be others to whom the Messiah would truly appear with the light of grace and consolation, and who would receive him with the greatest joy, as attaining the summit of their hope and desire. The two preceding verses contain the description of the former: see also ver. 15. of that chapter. The description of the latter is contained in the first seven verses of this chapter, where the prophet confirms and illustrates his consolatory doctrine, concerning the rising of *the light*, or *the morning*, (chap. viii. 20.) and the Messiah as the Jehovah, the future sanctuary, and illustrious teacher. See chap. viii. 14, 16—18. This is the connection of the discourse, and of the particle *לָכֵן* *ki lo*, rendered *nevertheless*, which is to

be referred to the 20th verse of the preceding chapter. With respect to this period, it is two-fold: The first part comprehends a prophecy, concerning the rising of this great teacher, and the place of his rising,—in these two verses; the latter sets forth the consequence of this rising, the joy of the pious, with a new declaration of the benefit, ver. 3—7. The first verse is extremely difficult. Vitringa renders it thus: *But thick darkness shall not be upon her that was in distress. In former times, he debased the land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali; but in after-times, he honoured her by the way of the sea beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.* After the prophet had described the infelicity of those who should reject the Messiah, he here changes his style, to describe the felicity of those on whom the Sun of Righteousness should arise, setting forth their joy and the cause of it. He had before his eyes the illustrious teacher to be manifested in Judea; and, foreseeing that this light of the nation would arise in Galilee, he speaks thus in prophetic rapture, *There shall not be thick darkness to that people who were in distress*, beyond all the inhabitants of the land of Ephraim; for the Galileans, that is to say, the people of Zebulun, Naphtali, and Asher, were carried away by Tiglath-pileser before the other Ephraimites; and in all the wars which the Ephraimites waged with the Syrians, or northern enemies, they were always the first and most exposed to injuries. Of this land, therefore, so much distressed in former times, the prophet affirms that the darkness shall not be thick in future time, but that God, though he seemed heretofore to have neglected Zebulun and Naphtali, yet hereafter would remarkably honour this part of Canaan; since here that great light of instruction and salvation, expected for so many ages, should arise; and that great and illustrious teacher, whom the prophet accurately describes, should illuminate and relieve the oppressed part of the land. The quotation and application of this passage by St. Matthew evidently prove the propriety of this interpretation. See Matth. iv. 13, 15, and Vitringa.

*Ver. 3. Thou hast multiplied the nation, &c.]* The prophet, in the remainder of this discourse, sets forth, *First*, A consequence of this great benefit, that is, the joy of the pious for so great a blessing vouchsafed to them; and *secondly*, He enumerates three causes of this joy; ver. 4—6. With respect to the first, there seems to be no doubt but the verse should be read as follows, *Thou hast advanced the nation; hast brightened upon her the joy, &c.* which is Vitringa's version; who observes very judiciously, that instead of

4 For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.

5 For every battle of the warrior *is* with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but *this* shall be with burning *and* fuel of fire.

6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be

upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of Hosts will perform this.

of *לָא* la, not; *לָהּ* lo, to her or it, should be read; which is agreeable to many of the ancient versions. The meaning is, "Thou hast advanced, amplified, or increased this nation with a very great benefit, and therefore prepared for it the highest joy; joy which, as the angel says to the shepherd, shall be to all people; true joy, arising from the consolations of the Gospel." See Luke, ii. 10. Zech. ii. 10. The prophet, in the subsequent part of the verse, makes use of two expressions to denote the highest degree of joy. See Psal. iv. 7. cxix. 62.

*Ver. 4. For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden*] *His burdensome yoke.* The following discourse illustrates the preceding; for it sets forth the great and mighty benefits connected with the appearance of the Messiah, among which the first mentioned is a taking off of the yoke from the shoulders of the people of Christ, and the giving them true liberty, after the example of the deliverance formerly obtained by Gideon, though proceeding from God alone without any human aid. See Jer. xxiii. 6. and Luke, i. 70, 71. where Zechariah seems to have had this passage in view. The *yoke* here spoken of means the yoke of sin, which occasioned the yoke and servitude of the law, (Gal. iii. 19. Acts, xv. 10.) and the *oppressor* seems most probably to refer to that *strong man*, whose power Christ broke and destroyed. The general meaning of the verse is, that Christ destroyed the power of sin and Satan: Heb. ii. 14, 15. 1 John, iii. 8. We may just observe, that as all the great deliverances in the church were figurative of that through Christ, so this of Gideon has by most writers been understood as remarkably figurative of the Christian redemption. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 5. For every battle of the warrior, &c.] So that every clashing of the noisy warrior, and the garment rolled in blood, shall be thrown to be burned; fuel for the fire.* Vitringa; who observes, that another cause of rejoicing, connected with the former, is *peace on earth*, Luke, ii. 14. which should follow the destruction of the enemies of Christ, a remarkable consequence of his appearing in the flesh, and of his kingdom which is described in these words. This is my opinion, says he, though it must be acknowledged that the construction of the passage is extremely difficult, and that it has been very variously interpreted. See Psal. xlvi. 9, 10. Vitringa thinks that the words include another sense, and refer to that destruction by *fire* which is threatened and has fallen upon some of the enemies of the gospel, and particularly upon Jerusalem and the temple. See chap. xxx. 33. xxxiii. 12. Rev. xviii. 8. 2 Pet. iii. 10.

*Ver. 6, 7. For unto us a child is born, &c.]* Though our prophet is every where most excellent, he is peculiarly so in this passage, which contains an emphatical description of the person and kingdom of the Son of God; the kingdom of peace; the eternal and universal kingdom, in which the faithful should have the highest cause for joy; which should bring with it an abolition of the whole yoke of sin and the law, and a destruction of all hostile and adverse powers, whether kings or princes, yea, of sin, Satan, and death itself, with respect to the saints. Who then can wonder at the joy of the church, in so great a light, in so excellent a teacher? But what is the foundation of this joy? The prophet gives the most certain and solid reason; because *a child is born*, and this child, the son of the living God; about to take the empire and found the kingdom of peace, and that eternal and most ample, and to destroy the whole government of sin; being indued with such properties and virtues as belong to so great a king and governor. Vitringa has proved, beyond all controversy, that this passage immediately refers to the Messiah, even our Lord JESUS CHRIST; and that it contains, *First*, An account of the *birth* of this illustrious person; *Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given*; where Christ is called a *child* in respect to his human, a *son* with respect to his divine nature. See Luke, ii. 11. Galat. iv. 2. *Secondly*, The office of this illustrious person; *The government is upon his shoulder*: which refers to the kingdom committed by the Father to Jesus Christ, whereof he himself says, *All power is given to me in heaven and earth*: Matt. xxviii. 18. See also John, v. 22. And of this kingdom and government the prophets and apostles speak largely. The expression is metaphorical, and alludes to the regal robe worn by kings and governors. See Jonah, iii. 6. and chap. xxii. 22. of this book. *Thirdly*, We have five qualities, or remarkable properties fitting him for his office. The *first* is, *Wonderful*; which seems to refer to the wonderful mystery of the two-fold nature in the Son of God, and is well explained by Rev. xix. 12. where it is said of this divine person, that he had a *name written which no man knew but himself*; which name is in the next verse said to be, "*The word of God,—the wisdom of God; the only-begotten, the first-begotten; the image of the Eternal Father, the effulgence of the divine glory.*" Comp. Judg. xiii. 18. Gen. xxxii. 29. and Prov. xxx. 4. He is *secondly* called *Counsellor*; an illustrious name, which, no doubt, respects the prophetic office of Christ. The Hebrew word *צַדִּיק* *iaetz*, properly signifies, "A person who gives counsel to others;" and Christ is here denoted not only as the lawgiver of his church,

8 ¶ The LORD sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel.

9 And all the people shall know, *even* Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria, that say in the pride and stoutness of heart,

10 The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones; the sycamores are cut down, but we will change *them into* cedars.

11 Therefore the LORD shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against him, and join his enemies together;

12 The Syrians before, and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand *is* stretched out still.

13 ¶ For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the LORD of Hosts.

14 Therefore the LORD will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day.

15 The ancient and honourable, he *is* the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he *is* the tail.

16 For the leaders of this people cause *them* to err; and *they that are* led of them *are* destroyed.

17 Therefore the LORD shall have no joy in their young men, neither shall have mercy on their fatherless and widows: for every one

church, but as the king, enforcing those laws by all the modes of persuasion. See chap. xi. 1, &c. Luke vii. 30. The *third* name is *Mighty God*: See chap. x. 21. This name is to be referred to the divine nature of the Messiah, and that mighty power whereby he subdueth all things to himself; the mighty God is the Messiah, the potent conqueror of Satan, and of all power subject to that great enemy of goodness. See Ps. xlv. 5. and compare Luke, xi. 22. John, xvi. 33. Rom. viii. 38. with verse 35. Rev. iii. 21. xix. 16. The *fourth* name is *Everlasting Father*, or *Father of Eternity*, which Christ may very properly be called, *First*, As he is the cause of eternal life to all the faithful; Heb. v. 9. John, iii. 36; and *secondly*, As he was the founder of the new and eternal age; that is to say, of the œconomy which is to endure for ever; for Christ is the father of a new generation to continue through all eternity, the second Adam, father of a new race; the head of a new and everlasting family, in which all the faithful are reckoned. The last appellation, *Prince of Peace*, is of easy interpretation, and to be explained from what the prophet immediately subjoins concerning the state of his kingdom, from chap. xi. 6, 7, 8. Psal. lxxii. 1, &c. and Zech. ix. 9, 10. We have, *fourthly*, the amplitude of this his *dignity*, and the *success* of his administration, set forth in the 7th verse; which is fully explained by the parallel places, and particularly Luke, i. 33. And in the last place we have the efficient cause of all that is preceding; *The zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall perform this*: that is, God's desire of promoting and vindicating his glory and majesty, is the principle of all the effects consolatory and tremendous, which concern the church. All things tend to the illustration of his glory and majesty, which God will defend and avenge, and that not faintly, but with zeal; a sign and sacrament of which is his name Jehovah; consolatory to the pious, terrific to the despisers of his covenant. See Luke, xxi. 22. John, xvi. 11. and Vitringa.

*Ver. 8—12. The Lord sent a word into Jacob*] We have here the third section of the fifth discourse, which reaches to the fifth verse of the next chapter; it is divided into *four* parts, and exhibits so many divine judgments concerning the state of the people of Ephraim, to be solemnly

denounced upon them by the prophet. The *first*, from the present to the 12th verse. The *second*, from the 12th to the 17th. The *third*, from the 17th to the 21st. The *fourth*, from chap. x. 1st to the 4th verse. The parts are almost all two-fold; wherein first the fault is laid down, and secondly the punishment, except that a third member is added in defence of the divine judgment: In the verses before us, we have *first* the fault, ver. 8—10. namely, the pride and contempt with which the Ephraimites had received the threatenings of the true prophets of God, who had denounced to them the unhappy consequence of their undertakings. Elevated with vain hope, the Ephraimites had declared that they would never desist from their purpose of invading Judæa for any denunciations of the prophets; on the contrary, they had boasted proudly, that strengthened as they were by their present alliance with the king of Assyria, though they had heretofore suffered great loss, they had no doubt of repairing their fortune: *Though the bricks were fallen down, they would build with hewn stones, &c.* The expression is metaphorically elegant, and denotes the restoration of a fallen state for the better; and the change of a mean and low to a more honourable and excellent situation. For their pride and arrogance, the God who laugheth vain men to scorn, denounces their punishment in the two following verses, and, according to his usual justice, assures them that the union with Rezin, wherein they boasted, should itself prove their destruction. This prophecy was fulfilled by Tiglath-pileser: 2 Kings, xvi. 17. A further threatening is subjoined at the end of the verse. See chap. v. 25.

*Ver. 13—15. For the people turneth not, &c.*] We have here the second crime of this refractory people, who, *impenitent and stupid*, regarded not the chastisement of the Lord, nor turned to him at his reproof. Therefore, in the 14th and 15th verses, a total subversion of their state and polity is denounced. The reader will observe, that the expressions, though metaphorical, are very plain from the prophet's own exposition. See chap. xix. 15. This was fulfilled when the people were carried away by Salmenezer.

*Ver. 16, 17. For the leaders, &c.*] We have here a defence

is an hypocrite and an evil-doer, and every mouth speaketh folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

18 ¶ For wickedness burneth as the fire: it shall devour the briers and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest, and they shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke.

19 Through the wrath of the LORD of

Hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire: no man shall spare his brother.

20 And he shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied: they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm:

21 Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Ma-

fence of the divine judgment taken from the universal corruption of the people; wherein God sets forth the justice of his proceeding, and shews that not from choice, but for the iniquities of the people, he is compelled to punish.

Ver. 18—21. For wickedness, &c.] For wickedness burneth as a fire, (and it shall devour the briers and thorns) and it burns up the thickets of the forest, and they mount up curled, like, &c. We have here in the 18th verse the third fault, the power of reigning and barefaced impiety, which is said to burn as the fire; the punishment whereof is denounced in the subsequent verses, which, as usual, is assimilated to the vice; namely, destructive factions, which shall overthrow their nation: Having rendered themselves hateful to God by their crimes, they shall perish by those very crimes; and by their dissention and internal factions, arising from the wickedness of their own dispositions, shall fall into mutual destruction; and inflamed by the lust of envy, avarice, and impurity, they shall perish in this very fire, as the prophet speaks in another place, chap. I. 11. The latter state of the Israelitish government abundantly proves the exactness of this prophet's prediction. See 2 Kings, vi. 28. xv. 10. 30. xvii. 1. xviii. 34, 35. Jerem. xix. 8. and Vitranga.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The former chapter concluded with a dismal scene of desolations; but here to the righteous there ariseth up light in the darkness, through that glorious Saviour, whose coming, like the sun, should dispel the clouds, and whose power should subdue every foe before him.

1. He is spoken of as the light of his people. There had been grievous vexations and ravages committed by Pul and Tiglath-Pileser, kings of Assyria; and more deplorable ones when Salmanezar carried away the Jews captive into Assyria; but, though the last under the Romans should be most terrible, there should be one alleviation of them, which the former had not. *The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light;* Christ the sun of righteousness arisen, who favoured Galilee with so much of his presence, preaching, and miracles: *they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, in a state of affliction under the Roman yoke, but more especially under the blindness and ignorance of their fallen minds, and exposed to eternal death, by reason of sin, upon them hath the light shined;* the light of the glorious gospel, dispensed by Jesus and his Apostles. *Note;* (1.) In the midst of the deepest distresses, a sense of Christ's presence and love alleviates every burden. (2.)

Every man by nature is a child of darkness, and his ways lead down to death and hell, till Christ the light of life arises upon his soul, pardoning, quickening, and leading him into the paths of peace. (3.) We might much better want the light of the sun, than the light of the gospel; for with the gospel the blind may find the way to heaven.

2. As the Saviour of his people; causing them to rejoice in him. *Thou hast multiplied the nation;* increased the number of faithful converts, either among the Jews in Galilee, or from the nations who dwelt among them; from whose sojourning there it was called, *Galilee of the nations;* and *hast increased the joy of it* (we read *not increased*, but the marginal reading of our English Bibles seems much preferable); the gospel being glad tidings of great joy to all who receive it: *they joy before thee, according to the joy of harvest;* more delighted with the blessed fruits of gospel grace, than with plenty of corn and wine; *and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil of conquered enemies,* such as now sin, Satan, death, and hell, are become, through the victory of our Redeemer. *For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian;* Christ, like the mighty Gideon, by the trumpet of his gospel, and the light of truth committed to earthen vessels, his ministers, hath delivered his people from the yoke of Satan and sin, more burdensome to the soul than the oppression of Midian to Israel. *For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood, but this of a different nature, shall be with burning and fuel of fire,* by the power of the Spirit of God, operating like fire upon the sinner's heart, and burning up his vile affections, as fire doth the fuel. *Note;* (1.) When Christ entered the lists in the behalf of his faithful people, his foes fell as lightning from heaven before him. (2.) Whoever has felt the bitterness and bondage of sin, and groaned under it, being burdened, will hear the glad tidings of salvation, through the Redeemer, with transport. (3.) They who are delivered from the power of sin and Satan, will ascribe the whole of their salvation to the Redeemer's almighty grace; for it is his right hand which hath gotten for us the victory.

3. The glorious perion of our Redeemer and Saviour is set forth under a variety of views, expressive of his excellent greatness, and admirably adapted to encourage the faith and hope of his people. *For unto us a child is born, one in the human nature, born for our sake, to be a Saviour to the uttermost, unto us a son is given;* the Son of God, already appointed by the declarations and promises of God, and as certainly to be incarnate as if he had then been on the earth; and lest the views of his humanity might lessen his

Assiah; and they together shall be against Judah. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

him in our eyes, the infinitely transcendent dignity of his person is insisted upon; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; invested with all power in heaven and earth, and especially establishing his throne in the hearts of his people: and his name shall be called, *Wonderful*; his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension, are full of wonders; his love, grace, redemption, amazingly great and glorious; and all he is and doeth, justly challenges the admiration of angels as well as men; *Counsellor*, which may be joined with wonderful: he is of the sacred Three, by whose infinite wisdom all things were created, and by whose providence and grace the whole world, above and beneath, is administered; and to his teaching are his faithful people indebted for their salvation, who, in every difficulty guided by his counsel, are safely brought at last to glory; *The mighty God*, very God as well as very man, sharing in all the incommunicable attributes of Deity, self-existence, eternity, omnipotence, &c. and mighty therefore to save all that come to him as their Redeemer; *The everlasting Father*, though in person distinct from God the Father, yet one with him in essence and the unity of the godhead; and particularly the Father of eternity to his faithful people, to whom he is the author of everlasting salvation; *The Prince of peace*; the procurer of peace between God and man, the giver of it to the troubled conscience; his faithful subjects are all peaceable; and, ruling in their hearts, he keeps them in perfect peace while reposing upon him, and will bring them shortly to everlasting peace and rest in glory. *Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end*; from small beginnings it shall increase more and more, till the ends of the earth remember themselves, and turn unto the Lord; *Ephraim shall not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim*; all animosities between his people will subside, and, oh that the time were come for this happy union of all true believers in one heart and one mind! upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, the Redeemer, the Son of David after the flesh, will be exalted, to order it, the kingdom of his Israel, and to establish it with judgment and justice, confirming his people in righteousness and true holiness, and executing judgment on their enemies, henceforth even for ever; for his dominion is that which shall not be destroyed; he ever lives and ever reigns, not only in time, but to eternity: *the zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this*; his faithfulness is engaged to fulfil his promise, his power almighty to accomplish his purposes; and therefore not a jot or tittle shall fail. Happy, therefore, are those souls who are brought under this government of Jesus, and, by experience of his grace, establishing that kingdom within them, which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, can say with humble confidence, *My King and my God*.

2dly, The same prophetic word which brings tidings of mercy to some, denounces the judgments of God on others. They who disregard his anger shall feel the lighting down of his indignation, and know by dire experience how fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God. The kingdom of Israel hath her shortly-approaching doom denounced; a moment's respite is in mercy given; before

God strikes he warns, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

1. A high charge is brought against them for sundry crimes and misdemeanours against the Majesty of heaven.

(1.) They braved God's threatenings with daring insolence. Though the Assyrians had demolished their houses in the siege, they vaunted how soon they would restore them in greater magnificence, changing the bricks for hewn stone; and when the sycamores were cut down for the besieger's use, to burn, or to facilitate their approaches, they boasted that they would supply their place with cedars. *Note*; Impenitence under warning providences is a sad symptom of approaching ruin.

(2.) They were incorrigible, nor in their deepest distresses deigned to humble their souls and seek to God. *Note*; If corrections bring us not to our knees now, God's fierce wrath will be poured out, and prayer come too late to be heard.

(3.) Their magistrates and ministers concurred in hastening the judgment by their ill example and lying promises. *The leaders of this people, or they who bless this people, deceive them, encouraging their false hopes, and seeing visions of peace for them when there is no peace.* *Note*; When ministers, instead of zeal against men's sins, suffer them to continue undisturbed, and speak smooth things to flatter them to their ruin, the case is desperate. The sick patient must needs die, if the physician administer poison instead of medicine.

(4.) Hypocrisy and falsehood were reigning sins. They who kept up the form of religion, were as abominable as the profane and abandoned sinner; the one renounced openly all respect to God; the others approached him with their lips, while their hearts were far from him, or, trusting in the meritoriousness of their outward duties and devotions, fatally deceived themselves to their ruin.

2. A heavy punishment is threatened, temporal and eternal.

[1.] The ruin of their country. The adversaries of Rezin, whom Ahaz had hired, 2 Kings, xvi. 7—9. succeeding in the reduction of Damascus, and incorporating the Syrian forces with their own, should fall upon Israel on one side, and the Philistines on the other, so that they should be grievously spoiled. *Note*; God sends lesser judgments first; and if these prove ineffectual, he has heavier in store; for,

[2.] Because, by their continued impenitence, his wrath was not turned away, but his hand stretched out still, he will make more terrible havock among them; neither young nor old, high nor low, priest nor people, should escape: nor would God extend the least compassion to the most miserable object. *Note*; (1.) When God visits for sin, the highest in station shall be among the first to suffer; crowns themselves plead no privilege at his bar. (2.) The minister, who speaketh lies to curry favour with the great, connives at their sins, or, indolently negligent, is a blind leader of the blind, will shortly appear a character the most detestable and base, and receive a punishment proportioned to his guilt and perfidy. (3.) The wickedness of the poor

## C H A P. X.

*The woe of tyrants. Assyria, the rod of hypocrites, for his pride shall be broken. A remnant of Israel shall return after the determined desolation. Israel is comforted with a promise of deliverance from Assyria.*

[Before Christ 713.]

**W**OE unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed;

2 To turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey,

and that they may rob the fatherless!

3 And what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory?

4 Without me they shall bow down under the prisoners, and they shall fall under the slain. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

5 ¶ O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation.

is as much remembered as the sins of the rich, and their want and wretchedness here will be no exculpation, rather an aggravation, of their sins, that when they had less of this world to ensnare them, they did not more carefully seek a better.

[3.] Intestine broils shall destroy them as well as the sword of the enemy; they should bite and devour one another, and even the nearest relations not spare their own flesh and blood; various instances of which appeared when their desolations drew near, and the ravages that the tribes made on each other opened an easier conquest for their enemies. *Note:* Nothing so weakens God's church as causeless divisions, and perverse disputes; for in the heat of religious controversy, the power of godliness is usually lost, and Satan reaps the spoil.

[4.] The wrath of God, terrible and eternal, would yet pursue them: their wickedness would kindle a fire of vengeance, which nothing could quench, and the smoke of their torment would ascend up for ever and ever: the darkness and distress of their outward situation were but faint images of their future prospects, when, as fuel for the flames, they should lie down in torment without end: for as in all their temporal judgments their obstinacy provoked a repetition of the strokes, so in the eternal punishment of the wicked God's wrath will never be turned away, but his hand be stretched out still, for his wrath will be for ever wrath to come.

## C H A P. X.

*Ver. 1—4. Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, &c.]* We have in the two first verses the fourth fault, and in the third and fourth the punishment. The fault complained of is, the injustice and the iniquity of the judges; and the punishment assigned is, that they should be absolutely deserted and deprived of all help and defence from God, whose laws they have so shamefully perverted; and shall miserably perish before their enemies, who shall come from far. Lowth renders the second clause of the first verse, *Unto the scribes that prescribe oppression:* and, ver. 3. instead of *leave your glory*, he reads, *deposit your wealth.* See Hosea ix. 11, 12. The meaning is, "To whom will you commit, as a trust or deposit, your most precious things, your riches, honour, liberty, religion, when God is become your enemy? Who shall be your protection and defence?" To which he answers in the next verse,

*Without me, every one shall bow down among them that are bound; [i. e. shall commence prisoners;] and they shall fall among the slain.* The meaning is, "Without my aid, and when I desert you, you shall all bow under the yoke, and either become slaves or fall by the sword of the Assyrians." See chap. lxxv. 12. and Vitringsa.

*Ver. 5. O Assyrian, &c.]* We have here the fourth section of the fifth sermon, which reaches to the end of this chapter, and which is two-fold; containing, *first*, a proposition in this verse, and *secondly*, an unfolding of that proposition; which consists of five parts: the first contains an explanation both of the cause for which God had decreed to permit the Assyrians to have such power over his people; namely, for the punishment of hypocrites and the purification of the church; as also of the crimes which the kings of Assyria would commit in the executing of his judgments; and of the punishment ordained for them, ver. 6—13. *Secondly*, We have the confirmation hereof, and a new exhibition of the pride of the Assyrian, with a fuller declaration of the divine judgment upon him: ver. 13—20. *Thirdly*, We have a purer state of the church, after having passed through the afflictions brought upon it by the Assyrian; ver. 20—24. *Fourthly*, The application of the above prophecy concerning the fall of the Assyrian to the comfort of the church; ver. 24—28. *And, fifthly*, A more particular description of this or some other powerful Assyrian monarch, about to lay waste Judæa, with its effects and consequences; from ver. 28. to the end of the chapter. It is supposed that Isaiah delivered this prophecy concerning the Assyrian at the same time with that preceding. The prophet, in the former chapters, had foretold the fate of the Ephraimites and Syrians, who had determined to attack, and, if possible, subvert the Jewish church and state. He therefore turns his discourse to the Assyrians, the executors of this judgment, who also in their time should make the same attempt against Judæa, and denounces their punishment; teaching at the same time in what light they were held by God, and consequently were to be considered by the careful observers of the ways of God. The proposition in this verse is elegant, but very difficult to be turned into another language according to its original force. Its immediate meaning is, "Woe to the Assyrian, who is the rod of mine anger; and the staff, which is in his hands, is my severity:" that is to say, "Whatever strength or power they have, which they have



6 I will fend him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.

7 Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but *it is* in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few.

8 For he saith, *Are* not my princes altogether kings?

9 *Is* not Calno as Carchemish? *is* not Hamath as Arpad? *is* not Samaria as Damascus?

10 As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria;

11 Shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?

12 Wherefore it shall come to pass, *that* when the LORD hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.

“have used in afflicting my people, would have been none at all, if my people had not provoked my wrath and severity; so that, not the Assyrians themselves, but my wrath and severity, and the decrees of my justice, ought to be esteemed the rod and staff beating my people; since, without that severity, the Assyrians themselves could have done nothing.” Vitringa remarks, that all the characters of this prophecy belong to Sennacherib; though possibly it may have a more extensive scope, and refer to the destruction of all the enemies of God, and the following great empires, which God made use of as rods and scourges to chastise and amend his people till the manifestation of the kingdom of his Son in the world. See Jeremiah li. 20. Bishop Newton observes, that, as the Assyrians totally destroyed the kingdom of Israel, and greatly oppressed that of Judah, no wonder they are the subject of several prophecies. The prophet here denounceth the judgments of God against Sennacherib in particular, and against the Assyrians in general; God might employ them as ministers of his wrath, and executioners of his vengeance; and so make the wickedness of some nations the means of correcting that of others. Prophecies, vol. i. p. 249.

*Ver. 6. I will fend him, &c.]* The enarration follows the proposition; the first part of which, extending to the 13th verse, contains, *first*, the hypothesis and the occasion of the design of this king; namely, that by the permission of God, he should subvert the Ephraimitish state, and succeed while thus engaged. *Secondly*, the crimes committed by him in the execution of this divine judgment; *ver. 7—11.* *Thirdly*, the punishment decreed for him; *ver. 12.* The reason is assigned in the verse before us, why God gave up his people to be punished by the Assyrian, namely, their hypocrisy. *I will fend him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people that have angered me will I give him instruction to take, &c.* See *ver. 16, 17.* of the preceding chapter, chap. viii. 1, 2. and Mic. i. 6, 7. 10.

*Ver. 7—11. Howbeit, he meaneth not so, &c.]* The prophet had taught the pious in what light they should consider the Assyrian, leading a large army with a splendid apparatus, and bringing under his power the people of God, so called, in the same manner as other nations; he shews that, though a great prince, he is only the minister of the divine providence and indignation; the executor of

the counsels and decrees of the supreme ruler, Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts, without whom he could do nothing; and that in those very expeditions which he undertook against the Ephraimites and Syrians, he was to obey the secret rule of the divine providence. “Yet this prevents not, says the prophet, his becoming guilty of great crimes before God, in the execution of these secret decrees; for, ignorant of the divine counsels, he had far different thoughts in his mind; sacrificing only to his ambition and lust by this war; forgetful of humanity and equity, to which all men are bound, not by any secret, but by the manifest law of conscience and reason: through pride and arrogance he vainly lifted up himself above the true God worshipped at Jerusalem, and raised his ambition far above the state of man; so that God, by the prophet, taxes him with *inhumanity* and *cruelty*, with arrogance and ferocity; elation of mind, pride, and contempt of the true God; crimes of such a sort, that he in his turn could not avoid the divine vengeance.” After having declared *that his princes* (*ver. 8.*) *were as kings*; that is to say, that his nobles were as great as the kings of other nations, and indeed made kings or governors by him over the countries which he had subdued, he adds—setting forth the greatness of his power and strength, and his prosperity in war—*Is not Calno as Carchemish, &c.?* that is to say, “None of those cities against which he had turned his arms had been able to resist them; that he had subjugated them all, one as well as another.” *Calno, Carchemish, Hamath, and Arpad*, were cities of Syria and Samaria, which this mighty monarch had subdued. See 2 Kings, xviii. 34. and chap. xxxvi. 19. To this proud boasting of his conquests, he adds impiety and arrogant contempt of that God of Israel, in whose hand he was but a rod:—*As my hand hath found or laid hold of these kingdoms of nothing, whose graven images are more excellent than those of Jerusalem and Samaria, shall I not, &c.* The kingdoms of nothing mean those kingdoms which were consecrated to idols, that is, to gods different from the gods worshipped by the Assyrians. See 2 Kings, xix. 12, 13. and Vitringa.

*Ver. 12. Wherefore it shall come to pass]* We have in this verse the punishment which God decreed for the king of Assyria, after he had performed all that work for which God raised him up. Bishop Newton observes, that this verse intimates that the Assyrians should be severely punished

13 For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done *it*, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man:

14 And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people; and as one gathereth eggs *that are left*, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped.

15 Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake *itself* against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up *itself*, as if

*it were no wood.*

16 Therefore shall the LORD, the LORD of Hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire.

17 And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame; and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day;

18 And shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body: and they shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth.

19 And the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few, that a child may write them.

punished for their pride, ambition, tyranny, and cruelty, after they had served the purposes of divine providence. There was no prospect of such an event while the Assyrians were in the midst of their successes and triumphs; but still the word of the prophet prevailed; and it was not long after these calamities brought upon the Jews, that the Assyrian empire, properly so called, was overthrown, and Nineveh destroyed. Instead of *I will punish the fruit*, &c. Bishop Lowth reads, *I will punish the effect*, &c.

*Ver. 13, 14. For he saith, &c.]* From these to the 20th verse we have a more full exposition and confirmation of what had gone before; particularly, the pride of the Assyrian, and his vain boasting joined with it—in these verses; a refutation thereof in the fifteenth verse; and the punishment ordained for him by God more fully set forth in verses 16—19. This *first* period comprehends his insolent boasting of the greatness of his deeds, the prosperity of his empire, and the success of his warlike expeditions; ascribed by him to the prudence of his own counsels, and the valour and strength of his forces; but without any the least acknowledgment of any superior and over-ruling power. *I have removed the bounds of the people*, &c. refers to his causing the conquered people to pass from one province to another; and so the Chaldee renders it. The last clause in this verse may be read, *I have put down many that were seated*; that is to say, many of those who were seated in thrones or places of honour; princes, rulers, magistrates. Jarchi renders it, *I have caused them to descend from the state of their sublimity*. Another effect of power and wisdom, in which the Assyrian boasts himself, is, *his hand had found as a nest the riches of the people*, &c. The comparison is elegant; and nothing could more strongly or significantly describe the insolent boasting of the Assyrian. It is remarkable, that birds, after they have laid their eggs in their *nests*, are most diligent in their care of them; and if at any time they are obliged, through fear of the spoiler, to forsake them, they hover about their nests, and flutter around, moving their wings, and peeping, chirping, or lamenting; thus imitating the affections of

the human mind. The prophet elegantly implies by this simile the extreme terror of this proud and oppressing king, which reigned in the minds of the conquered people; and we find that the mighty tyrants and conquerors of Assyria did spread such terror. See Joseph. Antiq. lib. ix. c. ult. and Lowth's 12th Prelection.

*Ver. 15. Shall the axe boast itself, &c.]* The prophet here refutes the Assyrian, in a grave discourse, adapted to humble his pride. He teaches what he had before declared, that in all his counsels, motions, works, he was the minister of the divine providence; incapable of doing any thing without the divine will and permission; and therefore his boasting was to be considered no otherwise than as if the axe and saw should magnify themselves against those who handle them, and claim to themselves, as instruments, that effect which was only due to the mover, as the cause. See ver. 5. and Vitringa.

*Ver. 16—19. Therefore shall the Lord, &c.]* The punishment decreed for the Assyrian, and mentioned in the 12th verse, is here more fully set forth. This passage is easy to be understood, if the prophesy be compared with the completion: read only chap. xxxvii. 36. and 2 Kings xix. 35, &c. and you will find that our prophet sets before your eyes, in the most lively colours, rather a history, than a prediction of the event. The emphasis of this passage consists in the elegance of the metaphors. The *first* is taken from a *leanness*, or *consumption*, which destroys the *fat*, and utterly mars the beauty of the human form; and which well describes that terrible plague that destroyed the flower of the Assyrian host. The *second* is taken from a *fire*, devouring the army in a short time, as a burning fire reduces combustible matter to ashes. The *glory* of the Assyrian here means his army. See chap. viii. 7. This *fire* was to be kindled by the *light of Israel*, &c. ver. 17. The meaning whereof is, that God himself, by the ministry of his angels, would effect the destruction of the Assyrian army without any human aid. The prophet here evidently alludes to that *light of Israel*, which led them out of Egypt. See Exod. xiii. 21. The *third* metaphor is taken from *thorns and briers*; which also refers to the Assyrian army;

20 ¶ And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.

21 The remnant shall return, *even* the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God.

22 For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, *yet* a remnant of them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness.

23 For the LORD God of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined, in the midst of all the land.

24 ¶ Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Hosts, O my people that dwellest in

Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian: he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt.

25 For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger, in their destruction.

26 And the LORD of Hosts shall stir up a scourge for him according to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb: and *as* his rod *was* upon the sea, so shall he lift it up after the manner of Egypt.

27 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.

army; and the metaphors continued in the subsequent verses seem to express farther the future destruction, not only of Nineveh, but of the then flourishing Assyrian empire. The words rendered *both soul and body*, are, without all doubt, proverbial, and imply the whole glory of the Assyrian empire. Vitringa would render the next clause, *And they shall be as the dissolution of one running away*; as much as to say, that the army of the Assyrians should faint and melt away, like the heart of a man flying from extreme danger. Schultens renders it, *And he shall be as when flesh, roasting in the fire, melts away*. The expression in the 19th verse in the original is elegant: *The trees of his forest shall be a number*; that is, a small remnant of inconsiderable people. So the Romans say, *nos numerus sumus*. See Vitringa.

Ver. 20, 21. *And it shall come to pass*] Here follows the third part of this enarration, which contains a description of the state of the church after the execution of this memorable judgment, and consists of two parts; in the first, a two-fold consequence of this judgement with respect to the church is described. In the second, the latter consequence, which involved a more ample sense, is more fully set forth. The two consequences of this judgment with respect to the state of the church are, *first*, a confirmation of the true people of God in their confidence to be reposed in him after this great deliverance granted to the church; ver. 20. *Secondly*, The conversion of the remnant to God, and their preservation as well in this affliction as in others of the like kind; ver. 21. This two-fold consequence is opposed to the two-fold vice of the people, before the time of this judgment. There were among them men fearing God; but who yet regarded the power of the Assyrian with greater fear than they ought. There were, besides, many others, totally alienated from God, who, by means of this great miracle, were brought to true repentance, and a serious acknowledgment of the God of Israel. Nay, not only the pious of that, but of future times, would by this means be confirmed in their

faith and adherence to the true God. Some apply this to the time of Hezekiah, immediately preceding this overthrow of the Assyrians; and others directly to the time of the Messiah. Vitringa takes a middle opinion, and observes, that, though the prophecy may in a great degree refer to the time of Hezekiah, yet it has its full and absolute completion in the time of the Messiah. See Zech. xii. 11. By the *mighty God*, in the 21st verse, Vitringa understands the Messiah. See ch. ix. 6.

Ver. 22, 23. *For though thy people Israel be as the sand*] The prophet had said that a remnant only of Judah and Ephraim would be preserved, and would return in true repentance to God; which might justly cause the wonder of both Jews and Israelites at the time when the prophet spoke these things; for it implied that the far greater part of the people would perish. This might justly offend the Jews, as they must have conceived it highly improbable that God should thus forsake his people; especially when they were at that time very numerous and flourishing. The prophet therefore declares more explicitly, that it was determined by God to exercise his justice and severity upon the Jews, the consequence of which would be, that the far greater part of them would be cut off and perish; and that a few only would remain. This is the sense of the present period, though there is some difficulty in the expressions. Vitringa renders the verses, *The consumption shall be precise or limited, overflowing with righteousness or mercy*. Ver. 23. *For the Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption, but a precise or limited one, in the midst of the whole earth*. Though this prophecy might be in part fulfilled at the Babylonish captivity, yet there can be no doubt that it has a farther reference to the times of the Messiah. See Rom. ix. 27. where we shall have occasion to speak more fully concerning it.

Ver. 24—27. *Therefore thus saith the Lord*] We have here the fourth part of the enarration, in which the above prophecy is applied to the consolation of the people of God, and wherein is *first* the proposition, ver. 24 and

28 ¶ He is come to Aiath, he is passed to Migron; at Michmash he hath laid up his carriages:

29 They are gone over the passage: they have taken up their lodging at Geba; Ramah is afraid; Gibeah of Saul is fled.

30 Lift up thy voice, O daughter of Galim: cause it to be heard unto Laish, O poor Anathoth.

31 Madmenah is removed; the inhabitants of Gebim gather themselves to flee.

32 As yet shall he remain at Nob that day: he shall shake his hand *against* the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.

33 Behold, the LORD, the LORD of Hosts, shall lop the bough with terror: and the high ones of stature *shall be* hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled.

34 And he shall cut down the thickets of the forests with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one.

*secondly*, the reason of the proposition: ver. 25—27. Having digressed a little, the prophet returns to the true and proper scope of his discourse; which is, to comfort the pious with respect to the evils that threatened their nation: wherefore, having clearly predicted the fall of the Assyrian, as a faithful teacher he applies this prophecy to the consolation and confirmation of the truly pious. The discourse of the prophet in the name of Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts, the God superior to all human power, is turned to the people of God *inhabiting mount Zion*; that is, the true Israelites, the sincere observers of that holy religion which was celebrated at Jerusalem and Sion, and who were not only attached to this place in body, but in soul and spirit. See chap. xii. 6. He dissuades these his people from anxious fear; *Be not afraid of the Assyrian, when he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lay his yoke upon thee, after the manner, or, in the way of Egypt*, that is, “when the Assyrian shall treat, or purpose to treat thee as a slave, and shall vex thee by his edicts, or the imperious execution of those edicts, as heretofore the Egyptians have treated you, laying heavy burdens upon you, and exacting severe tributes from you.” See Exod. i. 14. xx. 2, &c. In the next verses the reasons are given why the Lord would not have his people fear the Assyrians, because in a short time he would take vengeance upon them, ver. 25. and that in a singular and extraordinary manner, as he did upon the Midianites and Egyptians, ver. 26. The consequence of which should be, the removal of the yoke now imposed or to be imposed upon them. Instead of, *in their destruction*, ver. 25. we may read, *with their destruction*. The latter part of the 26th verse describes the manner of that judgment wherewith God would destroy the Assyrian without any human aid; and therefore the slaughter to be brought upon him is here compared as well to that singular and extraordinary one wherewith the Midianites were smitten, as to that tremendous judgment of God upon the Egyptians, who, upon the *lifting up of the rod of Moses*, were overwhelmed in the Red Sea. Each of these comparisons is elegant and expressive. Vitringa reads,—*a scourge for him, such as the blow upon Midian at the rock Oreb, and that of his rod upon the sea; and he shall lift*, &c. and the latter clause of ver. 27. he reads,—*and the yoke shall be dissolved by means of the oil*. According to the common interpretation, it is supposed that the meaning is, “For the sake of God’s believing people, called by the Psalmist his

“*anointed*; and also for the preservation of the kingdom and priesthood, both which offices were conferred by the ceremony of *anointing*.” But Vitringa is of opinion, that the prophet in this last passage rises in his ideas, and, having expressed the temporal deliverance of the church in the preceding clauses, here seals up the period with a consolatory clause, admonishing the pious of their deliverance from a spiritual yoke, that is to say, from all the power of sin and Satan, and of their entrance into the full and perfect liberty of the sons of God, through Jesus Christ, the king of his church; who, for this purpose, would communicate an abundance of the anointing spirit of wisdom, knowledge, prayer, liberty, and adoption. See Zech. iv. 6. We refer the reader to Vitringa for an explication and defence of this interpretation.

Ver. 28—32. *He is come to Aiath*] This is so minute a detail of the march of Sennacherib toward Jerusalem, the route of his army, and their several stations, that, though the description is a prophecy, Isaiah seems rather to speak like an historian, who is relating a fact already past, says Bishop Lowth. We have in the fifth part of the discourse, *first*, the expedition of the Assyrian monarch, described in the most lively manner in these verses; and, *secondly*, the ill success of that expedition, with its consequences; ver. 33, 34. The several places here mentioned are those where Sennacherib may have been supposed to have pitched his camp. *Poor Anathoth*, is in the Hebrew, ענייה ענייה *aniiah anathoth*; where the word, ענייה *aniiah*, rendered *poor*, relates to the signification of *Anathoth*; a beauty frequently to be met with in the original of the sacred writings, but seldom preserved in translations. The history of Sennacherib’s expedition well explains this fine and circumstantial prophecy. See 2 Chron. xxxii. 9. 2 Kings, xviii. 13, 14.

Ver. 33, 34. *Behold, the Lord, &c.* We have in these verses the consequence of the expedition before mentioned, Interpreters, however, vary greatly respecting their application; but Vitringa is clearly of opinion, from the whole scope and coherence of the prophecy, that the passage refers not, as some would have it, to the destruction of the house of David, but to that of Sennacherib, which has been the subject of this whole prophecy; and whose overthrow is painted in similar terms, ver. 18, 19. In Ezekiel the Assyrian is called *a cedar in Lebanon*. *The mighty one* by whom this great cedar in Lebanon was to fall, can mean no other than the destroying angel referred to in ver. 17. See Vitringa.

REFLECTIONS.

## C H A P. XI.

*The peaceable kingdom of the Branch cut of the root of Jesse.  
The victorious restoration of Israel, and vocation of the Gentiles.*

[Before Christ 713.]

**A**ND there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall

grow out of his roots :

2 And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD ;

REFLECTIONS.—1st, God proceeds in his controversy with Israel.

1. He accuses their governors of oppression and injustice, in framing such laws as immediately tended to distress the poor; or by making the proceedings so tedious and expensive, that the needy man never could afford to maintain his right; or in their administration they were so corrupt, that they enriched themselves with the spoil of the fatherless and widows, and feared not to rob and plunder those who were too weak to resist. *Note;* There is a lawgiver, to whom the oppressed may appeal, and woe to those whose unrighteous decrees shall come before his bar!

2. He warns them of the folly, sin, and danger of their ways. They braved it out now, but *what will ye do in the day of visitation, when God rises up to judge? and in the desolation which shall come from far? from the king of Babylon: to whom will ye flee for help, in that day of calamity? and where will ye leave your glory?* the riches, which they accounted their great support, but in that day would perish irrecoverably. *Without me, when forsaken of my help, they shall bow down under the prisoners, or among the prisoners, and shall fall under, or among the slain;* either in chains led captive, or left dead by the enemies' sword; and after all, greater judgments are still in store. *Note;* (1.) As there is an awful day of inquiry approaching, it becomes every one seriously to consider what he shall then do, and how he shall be able to stand before the eternal Judge. (2.) Whatever greatness and glory a sinner may acquire, he must leave it all behind, and go a naked criminal to a righteous bar, where no covering or excuse can hide his iniquities, and whence there lies no appeal. (3.) They who live without God, will die without hope, the prisoners of the grave, and lying down among the slain in the second death. (4.) It will be the consummation of misery to the damned, that no gleam of hope will ever cheer their darkness, nor the least prospect appear of God's justice being ever satisfied.

2dly, Desolations upon Israel being accomplished, let not Judah think to go unpunished: Sennacherib is commissioned to shake the rod over them; yet God prescribes bounds to his pride, and saith, Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further.

1. The Jews are described as *an hypocritical nation;* for, though they complied with the reformation of Hezekiah, their hearts in general remained unchanged, and their religious services were but vain formality, and therefore they are called, *The people of my wrath;* nothing being in God's sight more detestable than hypocrisy, yet no sin so common among professors.

2. God hath a rod prepared to scourge them; the Assyrian monarch is commissioned from him to ravage and

spoil their country, and as mire in the streets to tread them under foot. *Note;* (1.) The tyrants of the world are but the tools of providence. (2.) They who most impiously employ their power against God, receive it from him, and he can make their wickedness subservient to his glory. (3.) When God chastises his children, he intends their profiting, not their perdition.

3. The proud instrument employed thinks not who employs him, nor means to answer God's purposes but his own; to establish universal monarchy, and to gratify his ambition: boasting, therefore, his power and conquests, he promises himself success against Jerusalem, as well as the other cities that he had taken; his princes, equal to kings, were able to supply his army for the accomplishment of the extensive conquests which he meditated. A variety of cities, the capitals of vanquished countries, he enumerates, over which his arms had proved successful; and whose inhabitants he had transplanted into other countries, after having plundered their houses of their treasures, as eggs taken from the nest while the dam is absent, so that no resistance was made; and none able to withstand him, of all the nations that he or his predecessors had invaded; and this he vainly imputes to his own strength and wisdom, as if none could defeat his politics, and none could withstand his power. Whence he concludes, that as the gods of the heathen whom he had subdued were more powerful than the gods of Jerusalem and Samaria, and the former were already fallen a prey, the latter would afford him as easy a victory; blasphemously comparing Judah's God to the idols of the nations, and supposing him equally unable to protect his votaries. *Note;* (1.) Nothing is farther from the hearts of sinners than to serve God's designs; but while they mean only their own ends, they are made to answer his. (2.) What is a worm of earth, though princes bow before him, compared with him whom angels, principalities, and all the powers above, obey? (3.) To leave out God in the account of our gains, and to ascribe them to our own prudence, is direct atheism. (4.) Vanity and self-sufficiency generally end in shame and disappointment.

4. God by his prophet rebukes the insolent boaster, and foretels his approaching ruin. Not more absurd would be the boast of the axe or saw in the craftsman's hand, as if the work done was theirs and not his who used them, than for this proud king, the rod of God's justice, to vaunt his conquests; or for this staff of God's indignation to arrogate the glory of his victories to himself, as if he was not the mere instrument, but the self-sufficient agent in those achievements: but God will make him know his folly in his fall; when he has done his work of chastising and correcting God's people, for which he is employed, then shall his pride and haughtiness be humbled; his

mighty

3 And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears :

mighty army, the glory of his strength; like a body emaciated with consumption, shall pine away, and as fuel for the fire shall be burnt to ashes. God, the Light and Holy

One of Israel, the Messiah, shall, by his angel, in one day consume the whole army, and as easily as briars and thorns fall before devouring fire. Though thick as a forest his tents or as the javelins of his soldiers, and tall as cedars his mighty captains, they shall be consumed together, body and soul, *as when a standard-bearer fainteth*, and the rout is universal; so easily and utterly would they be destroyed; and so few escape the general ruin, that, instead of a muster-master, a little child might number them. *Note*; (1.) The most proud and insolent, God can abase. (2.) In all the visitations on his believing people, God has some gracious design to answer; when that is done, the rod will be burnt. (3.) In the midst of our trials, if God be our light, we shall see a door of escape, or be comforted with his presence, which can make the heaviest afflictions light. (4.) None ever hardened his heart against God, and prospered. (5.) When God arises to judge the wicked, he will destroy both body and soul together in hell.

3dly, When judgment is executed on the enemies of God's church, mercy is reserved in store for his faithful people. Amid the general desolations, a remnant would be preserved, and return to their old habitations after Sennacherib raised the siege of Jerusalem, or from the Babylonish captivity: but this prophecy looks farther, and especially regards the times of the Messiah, Rom. ix. 27.

1. A remnant of Israel would then be saved, escaping from the general blindness and unbelief which were upon the rest of their countrymen; renouncing their vain confidence, as now they were taught by sad experience the vanity of trusting in Assyria for help, and therefore in faith and truth placing all their hopes of salvation on the power and grace of their Redeemer alone. *Note*; When we return to God, renouncing our self-dependence and our sins, God will turn to us in pardon and peace.

2. When the mighty God the Saviour hath secured his own faithful people, the remnant of Jacob, then vengeance will, according to God's decree, be executed on the more numerous part of Israel that have rejected his salvation; and herein God will abundantly manifest his righteousness, when in all the land a consumption shall be made of the obstinately unbelieving.

4thly, Now God,

1. Encourages his people to trust, and not to be afraid: terrible as Sennacherib's invasion appeared, God had set bounds to his ambition: though for a while they should suffer, as when their fathers were in Egypt, under the scourge, or be distressed as at the Red Sea, when the Egyptians pursued them, yet in a moment the cause of their fears would cease, and God's anger, which seemed to threaten them in this invasion, be removed by the destruction of the Assyrians. A destroying angel, his scourge, should pass through the Assyrian host with sudden and terrible destruction by night, as the sword of Gideon smote the Midianites, and the sea swallowed up the Egyptians, when Moses stretched out his rod. Their enemies de-

feated, the burden of tribute imposed on them, 2 Kings, xviii. 14, would be taken off, and their yoke of bondage to Assyria be destroyed, *because of the anointing*, for the sake of the faithful, who have an unction from the Holy One, or for the sake of the Messiah, who is the author of every mercy and blessing that descends on his people. *Note*; God's believing people need never fear; there is hope for them in the darkest day.

2. He describes the rapid progress of the Assyrian king advancing to the siege, and the ravages and dismay which he shall spread around him: without the least resistance he marches from Aiath to Migron, and thence to Michmash, where he establishes his magazines; and, hastening through the noted pass, 1 Sam. xiv. 4, encamps for a night at Geba, in Benjamin. Frighted at his approach, the inhabitants sought only to save themselves by flight; while detachments from his army ravaged the country, and the cries of the poor people, plundered by the soldiers, were heard from one end of Judæa to the other. Nob was his last station, where he halted within sight of Jerusalem, and, shaking his hand in threatening, promised himself a speedy conquest of those high battlements. *Note*; Success is apt to intoxicate, and the confidence of the proud turns to their destruction.

3. His overthrow is determined. The Lord, the Lord of Hosts, before whom the mightiest are but as dust before the whirlwind, will stretch out his hand, and confound the aspiring hopes of the Assyrian; and all his army and chief captains, as the cedars of Lebanon fall under the stroke of the axe, shall perish by the destroying angel. *Note*; (1.) The terrors of God in the day of wrath will overwhelm the proudest, and sink the mightiest in despair. (2.) None ever persecuted God's church and people with impunity.

## CHAP. XI.

*Ver. 1. And there shall come forth a rod*] The fifth section of the fifth discourse, beginning here, and concluding with the next chapter, is twofold: in the first part, the kingdom of Jesus Christ is described; in what manner, arising from the smallest beginnings, it should go on to increase, till at length it should attain the highest perfection, ver. 1—9. In the second part are set forth some remarkable events of that kingdom, illustrating its glory, with their consequences, ver. 10. to chap. xii. 6. The first part again is twofold: 1st, Exhibiting to us the king or ruler of this glorious kingdom, ver. 1—3. who is described by his birth, and humble state after his birth; ver. 1. by his qualities, eminent endowments, or virtues; ver. 2, 3. 2dly, We have the entire œconomy of this kingdom, ver. 4—9. where this œconomy is set forth, as well with respect to the true subjects of the kingdom,—ver. 4. to the middle, as with respect to its enemies and adversaries, in the remainder of the 4th verse. The reason and foundation of that œconomy are delivered in the fifth verse; after which are set forth the excellent consequences, that is to say, the flourishing and desirable state of the kingdom, to be known from its attributes; among which are *peace and concord* among the

4 But with righteousness shall ye judge meek of the earth: and he shall smite the poor, and reprove with equity for the the earth with the rod of his mouth, and

the subjects of every different kind and nation, combining in one faith, and performing obedience to the same king, ver. 6—8. and also the removal and destruction of all those hurtful and destructive things from which the kingdom might apprehend any detriment, together with the exuberance of the knowledge of God and his ways, ver. 9. There can be no doubt, from the particle *and*, and from the manifest opposition of the sentences, that this prophecy is in immediate connection with that preceding. After the prophet had said that the Assyrian *forest* and *tree* should be entirely cut off and destroyed, ch. x. 33, 34. he observes, that it shall be very different with the house of David; from whose *trunk*, though cut down, a king shall arise and flourish, who shall subject the whole world to himself. From a review of ch. ix. 4—6. xvi. 4, 5. xxxi. 8, 9. xxxii. 1. the connection of these chapters will appear more evident. The prophet, borne away by the divine Spirit, saw more in the breaking of the Assyrian yoke, and the deliverance procured for the church in the time of Hezekiah by the hand of God, than is seen by the carnal eye: he beheld in this remarkable event an example of the true deliverance and vengeance which the Son of God, about to erect his kingdom in this world, would hereafter perform for his church: the whole scheme of that divine œconomy was before his eyes: he saw the anti-type in the type; the truth in the figure; in the example of the deliverance from Assyria, an image of the true and perfect deliverance: in the fall of the king of Assyria he contemplated the fall of all the enemies, and of Satan, the chief of those enemies, who have opposed themselves to God and his kingdom in the world, from the birth of the church; and thence, in prophetic rapture, having mentioned the overthrow of the Assyrian, leaping over the intermediate times and events, he thus continues his prophecy: *And there shall come forth a rod from the trunk of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.* We may just remark, that a continued prophetic oration often coheres less with the parts preceding, than with the thoughts of the prophet, with which it ought truly to be connected; whence those various transitions so observable in all the prophetic writings; for, as the prophets thought more than they spoke or wrote, they left their discourse to be supplied by their readers and hearers; which is to be prudently interpreted, according to the analogy and history of other prophecies: as here when it is said, *And Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one; and there shall come forth a rod from the trunk of Jesse;* we are thus to understand it, according to the mind and ideas of the prophet, “*And after their fall, and other notable events, to happen in process of time, according to their order; among which will be the Babylonish captivity, the departure of the sceptre of the house of David, the kingdom of the Asmoneans, and afterwards of the Herods, to be joined with the remarkable humiliation of the house of David; a rod shall come forth from this trunk of David, so cut down and reduced, under whose kingdom the church shall obtain a perfect deliverance.*” See Vitringa, where many examples of a similar connection

are produced. The metaphorical expressions made use of in this verse are designed to set forth, not only the humble birth of the Messiah from the family of David, when that family was greatly reduced, the posterity of Jesse being few only, and the kingdom of David destroyed; but that he should be born in such a way, by virtue of the promise given to the fathers, that in his birth something divine might be observed, and a great expectation of him should be raised from his origin and first appearance. See John, vii. 42. The birth of Jesus Christ fully verified this prophecy.

*Ver. 2. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him]* After an account of his birth, the prophet here exhibits the qualities and endowments of the Messiah; namely, the excellent and extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit. See 1 Cor. xii. 8, 9. By the gifts of the Spirit, I understand certain spiritual dispositions, which adorn and perfect the man, so far forth as he is spiritual; concerning which, as found in the Messiah, the prophet here informs us of three things: *First*, what these gifts should be; *secondly*, by what cause they shall be produced; *thirdly*, in what manner they shall be possessed by the Messiah. As to the *first*, these gifts are commonly thought to be six; wisdom, prudence, counsel, courage, knowledge or love, and the fear of Jehovah; but as the gifts of the Spirit are commonly said to be seven, (Rev. i. 4, 5, 6.) so Vitringa and others have thought that *the Spirit of the Lord*, in the first part of the verse, denotes here also a distinct gift; namely, the spirit of prophecy, (see chap. xlii. 1. lxi. 1.) that is, that gift of grace, by which a person is endued, through the Spirit, with a knowledge of the secret will and counsels of God: and if the spirit of prophecy be thus understood, we may remark an elegant order observed by the prophet in recounting these gifts: for he begins with the perfections of the understanding and judgment, and ends with the perfections of the will. The first perfection of the understanding is knowledge; the next to this is wisdom; which is followed by that virtue of the judgment, prudence, and by that which is near allied to it, an abundance of counsel, or an aptitude to teach: then follow three perfections of the will; fortitude, knowledge, or rather love, (for that is the meaning of the phrase in this place) and fear or reverence of Jehovah. The whole perfection of the human mind is circumscribed within these gifts and graces; and these gifts and graces were most eminently found in the human nature of Jesus Christ, to whom God gave not the Spirit by measure, and who was a prophet mighty in word and deed. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 3, 4. And shall make him of quick understanding]* We have here the œconomy of the Messiah's kingdom, with respect to his true subjects, and with respect to his adversaries: with respect to the former, we have, *first*, the offices of this great teacher set forth, which are, 1. to found a kingdom, or to collect a people, over whom he should preside by the preaching of the Gospel; and 2dly, to rule that kingdom with righteousness and equity. The former part of the verse is rendered by Lowth, *And he shall*

with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

6 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.

9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

*shall be of quick discernment in the fear of Jehovah.* The meaning is, that the Messiah, in collecting the people who should compose his kingdom, shall principally regard in them this quality of fear or reverence for the Lord; and, with the greatest sagacity and perspicuity of judgment, shall discern and separate those subjects in whom he finds this quality; not suffering that judgment to be deluded by the external appearance of truth or honesty, or by any prejudice of public report; by penetrating into the interior recesses of the mind by his prophetic spirit, he shall discriminate all error, the good from the bad, the pious and sincere from the impious and hypocritical: for an example of this in the Messiah, see John, i. 48, 49. With respect to his adversaries it is added, that he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth; by which is meant, that by his sacred doctrine he shall convince the earthly and carnal of the iniquity of their ways, and of that future and dreadful punishment reserved for those who despise his instructions, and continue in the practice of sin: or, according to others, these words denote the judgments which the Messiah, the great prophet, should not only denounce, but also inflict on the obstinate and professed enemies of his kingdom. See Rev. xi. 5, 6. Luke, xix. 14, 27. 2 Thess. ii. 8. and Vitringa.

*Ver. 5. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins]* We have here the basis and foundation of this œconomy, namely, the justice and fidelity of the king. Girdles were worn by the easterns both for ornament and use. The metaphor here implies that these virtues of righteousness and fidelity, or truth, are the proper and true virtues of Christ the king; most closely adhering to him, as a girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, Jer. xiii. 11. that these virtues should be conspicuous in the whole administration of his kingdom; and at once be the ornament and the support of it. The sum is, that the kingdom of Christ should be a kingdom of the highest equity, and the king of it most perfect; who, though judging his true subjects by the law of grace, by faithfully performing all the promises of the Gospel, and every condition of the covenant to them, will yet not omit to punish the enemies of his church according to their deserts, and thus to satisfy the law of justice: so that he shall not be less venerable and awful for his justice in judgment, than amiable and desirable for his truth, fidelity, and constancy in performing his promises; which, being things naturally united, are not by any means to be separated.

*Ver. 6—9. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb.]* We

have here the illustrious consequence of the œconomy of this divine kingdom, this kingdom of righteousness, equity, faith, and grace. Who can wonder that a kingdom, though increasing from the smallest beginning, should make a great progress in a little time, extend its wings widely, and procure for its subjects security, peace, concord, felicity, and a clear and abounding knowledge of the ways of God; whose king, armed with divine power, exercises in the administration of it perfect justice; enriches his subjects with excellent heavenly gifts, and at the same time teaches and instructs them himself? Who would not wish to be the subjects of so blessed, so perfect a kingdom? Who would wonder at the conflux of the nations to this kingdom?—A kingdom, if you consider its security and glory; if its discipline and instruction, a school; if its consolation and spiritual food, a fold, for a flock well fed and safely reposed? This is the connection of the prophet. His expressions are metaphorical: he teaches us, that it shall come to pass in this kingdom (which here, changing the metaphor, he represents under the figure of the flock lying down and feeding under the care of the Messiah, as the great and chief shepherd) not only the most profound peace shall flourish, but also the utmost security; inasmuch, that the most inveterate enemies of the kingdom of God, brought into its communion, shall lay down their cruelty, barbarity, and ferocity, their inclination to hurt, their craft and subtilty; and not only so, but this kingdom also shall be purged from all offences, from all evils and instruments of malice; which eminent good proceeds from another, and that equally or more remarkable, namely, the repletion of the earth with the knowledge of the Lord; whereby the people being illuminated, shall cast off their barbarous and depraved manners, shall willingly subject themselves to the rule of the Messiah, with meekness and humility, and shall fulfil the law of brotherly love by the grace of the Holy Spirit, in the offices of mutual good-will. This is the sum of the present passage, divested of metaphor, whereof the prophet himself gives us the key in the beginning of the 9th verse. Compare Acts, x. 10, 11, &c. The holy mountain, ver. 9. means the Christian church; and so it is commonly used by our prophet. See ch. lxxv. 25. and Matth. xiii. 41. Michaelis observes, that these figurative expressions have employed the wits of interpreters, who have endeavoured to assign a mystical sense to each of the images; whereas the nature of the description is such, that a general truth is to be deduced from the whole, not a partial one from every particular. The intention of the prophet was,



10 ¶ And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

11 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.

12 And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

13 The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.

14 But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together: they shall lay

was, to describe the happiness of the Messiah's reign, which was to consist in the greatest purity of worship, in the abolition of the Levitical ceremonies, and in the unlimited promulgation of the doctrine of the Gospel throughout the world; the natural tendency of which would be, the promotion of peace, and the exercise of benevolence among mankind. Though it would argue some degree of enthusiasm to interpret Virgil's 4th Eclogue in this manner, yet it is no absurdity to ascribe this meaning to the sacred prophet. The intention of his whole book is, to communicate the knowledge of future events, and more especially the coming of the Messiah: to interpret this passage, therefore, in that light, is consistent with the whole tenor of the prophet's writings; and it should be observed, that the Jewish metaphors, which were originally borrowed from hieroglyphics, were used in common to express these hidden sentiments; and the interpretation of them in this sense is natural, and consistent with the canons of true criticism. We may just remark, that the last sentence in the 9th verse, expressing the exuberance of the divine knowledge, is elliptical. The meaning is, "The earth shall be spread over, and filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters spread over the bottom, and entirely fill all the channels of the sea. From the efficacious preaching of the Gospel, and the knowledge of Christ, those wonderful conversions and blessed effects signified in these verses shall proceed." See Hab. ii. 14. This prophesy may with propriety be referred to the kingdom of grace, as first established upon the earth; though there can be no doubt that in its perfection it refers to those latter days, that end of time, when we hope and expect that the knowledge of Christianity, universally diffused, will produce a more eminent exertion of all those divine graces and virtues which it inculcates.

Ver. 10. *And in that day, &c.*] We have here the latter part of the prophesy, which sets forth some more illustrious events of this kingdom, with their consequences; and it is twofold. *First*, we have the events themselves, ver. 10—16. *Secondly*, the consequence of the events; a remarkable thanksgiving of the Jewish people, converted to the Messiah, for the redemption granted to them; chap. xii. 1—6. The events here proposed are three; the remarkable conversion of the Gentiles, ver. 10.; the calling of the dispersed Jews to the communion of the kingdom of Christ, ver. 11—14.; and a diminution of the adverse empires, Egypt and Assyria, ver. 15, 16. The present verse shou'd

be rendered, *And it shall be in that day that the Gentiles shall consult or seek to the root of Jesse, which stands for an ensign of the people; and his rest shall be glory.* The meaning is, that the Gentiles, hitherto deluded by false miracles and false teachers, after they shall understand that there is an illustrious teacher of true religion sprung from the root of Jesse, who, like a divine oracle, teaches the way of salvation without error; who is also the salvation of God, the refuge of the sinner, the king and Saviour of the miserable; having left their false teachers, oracles, and superstitions, would consult this teacher, prophet, and source of true divinity, and seek salvation in him with desire, thirst, faith, hope, love, confidence,—all which is implied in the very expressive words of the original; and moreover, that every place, in which this root of Jesse should manifest himself, and rest as in a house, palace, or temple, should be distinguished with the undoubted signs and proofs of the divine glory; as heretofore God distinguished the tabernacle, and afterwards the temple, his seat, and the place of his rest, with the signs of his glory and presence. In short, wherever the Messiah should have his church, the prophet foretels he should demonstrate his presence by illustrious signs of his grace, and the operation of his Spirit. See Vitringa.

Ver. 11—14. *And it shall come to pass, &c.*] Another event of the kingdom of the Messiah is, the calling of the dispersed Jews, the outcasts of Israel, the dispersed of Judah, and their general collection to the church. The period is difficult: it divides itself into two parts: the first describing the benefit itself of this vocation and collection, and its manner; ver. 11, 12. and the second, the state of the people restored. There can be no doubt of the subject of this prophesy. It certainly refers to the Jews; but there is more difficulty in determining the period to which this prophesy refers. There were two collections of the dispersed Jews after the delivery of this prophesy: the one from the Babylonish captivity; the other of those who were dispersed among the Gentiles, and who were called to the faith at the first preaching of the Gospel: a third will hereafter follow, as we learn from other prophetes; and that universal, of the whole Jewish race to the communion of Christ in the latter days. See Rom. xi. 25, 26. and it seems that the prophet in this place more immediately refers to this last and general calling of the Jews; which, according to him, is evidently to happen after the calling of the Gentiles: this appears probable from a variety of parallel passages

their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them.

15 And the LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams,

and make *men* go over dry shod.

16 And there shall be an high way for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.

passages in the prophets, and from the emblem made use of; wherein this deliverance of the Jews under the Messiah is compared by the prophet to their great and entire redemption out of Egypt. See ver. 15. It is my opinion, therefore, says Vitringa, that this prophecy, in its first sense, with respect to its incipient completion, is to be referred to the first time of establishing the kingdom of Christ out of Canaan; but in its second sense, with respect to its perfect completion, to the end of time. The reader must observe here, in proof of what has been advanced above, that the prophet's ideas respecting this future and spiritual deliverance, are wholly taken from the temporal deliverances of the Jews out of Assyria and Egypt. In the 13th and 14th verses the state of the converted Jews is set forth; *first*, That all envy shall be extinguished among them, and a true brotherly love shall fill their souls; and *secondly*, that, joined to the Gentiles, they shall strenuously defend the cause of Christ and his kingdom against the enemies and opposers of it. The sense of the 14th verse can be understood in no other than a spiritual and mystical sense, to signify that those who are called by the Gospel, and converted to Jesus Christ, full of zeal for his glory, shall labour with all their might to reduce to the obedience of Christ all the people bordering upon the Jewish nation, and who were formerly enemies to it; such as the Philistines, Ammonites, Moabites, Arabs, and Syrians; either confounding them by the clear demonstration of the truth, or, by rational convictions and the grace of God, subjecting them to the obedience of Christ, and his church. See 2 Cor. x. 4. Matt. xi. 12. *They shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west*, is a metaphorical expression, signifying literally, that the Jews and Ephraimites with a sudden and quick motion, like that of birds, should invade the Philistines, who were situated towards the East, and subdue them. Lowth renders the passage, *They shall invade the borders of the Philistines westward*. The history of the church manifestly proves the completion of this prophecy in part; and other prophecies respecting the state of the Jews evidently lead us to expect the perfect completion in God's good time.

*Ver. 15, 16. And the Lord shall utterly destroy*] This is the last part of this illustrious prophecy, in which the prophet declares, that about that time in which God should establish the kingdom of his Son in the world, two adverse kingdoms, which seemed to threaten a delay of this great work, should be destroyed or reduced to such a state as not to be able to hinder the progress of the calling of the Jews and Gentiles; which two kingdoms are here, in the prophetic style, denoted by the names of Egyptian and Assyrian. Bishop Warburton observes, that it was usual among the Hebrews to denote any character or action by that of the kind which was become most known or cele-

brated. In this place a second passage through the Red Sea is promised in literal terms; but who will therefore say that this is the literal meaning? The literal meaning, though the prophecy be in figurative terms, is, simply, redemption from bondage; for *Egypt* in the Hebrew phrase signified a place of bondage. Vitringa reads the first clause of the 15th verse, *The Lord shall devote to destruction the gulph or bay of the Egyptian sea; by which is meant the Nile, as a symbol of the kingdom of Egypt; as, in the next clause, the river means the Euphrates, or symbol of Assyria; and accordingly Vitringa renders it, Over the Euphrates, and shall smite it into seven outlets; that is to say, he shall divide or separate it into seven streams, so as to render it easy to be passed over. The fate of the Egyptian and Assyrian empire under the Seleucida and Lagida is thought to be here referred to, and spiritually the destruction of the kingdoms of idolatry and superstition. My belief, says Vitringa, upon the strength of this prophecy, to which we grant the most ample and extensive sense, is that it will come to pass: all the impediments of the great empire of the world being removed, which yet delay the perfect completion of the great and excellent promises made to the church, the empire of the kingdom of Christ will extend itself over the whole world, according to the remarkable prediction of Daniel, chap. ii. 35, &c.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, As the coming of the glorious Messiah was the great hope of God's people of old, in every time of trouble; the prophet directs them to look above their temporal deliverance from the power of Sennacherib, to that eternal salvation which their great Redeemer would accomplish for all the faithful.

1. His descent is spoken of: *As a rod out of the stem of Jesse*; it being promised to David, that from him Christ should spring; and *a branch shall grow out of his roots*; signifying the meanness of his appearance in the flesh, as a tender branch compared with the tall cedars of this world's princes; and intimating the low estate to which the family of Jesse would be reduced, when all the former royalty that it possessed would be gone, as the tree cut down, whose stump only remains in the earth. And such was the case with the family of Joseph and Mary when Jesus was born.

2. His qualifications for the work appointed him are mentioned. *The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him*; even the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and with this text he once opened his ministry, *Luke, iv. 18. the spirit of wisdom and understanding*; the hid treasures of which are all resident in Jesus; *the Spirit of counsel and knowledge*; how to execute the plan of redemption, to preach the gospel, instruct his people, and order the affairs of his spiritual kingdom, to God's glory, and the salvation of the faithful; *the spirit of*

## C H A P. XII.

*A joyful thanksgiving of the faithful for the mercies of God.*

[Before Christ 713.]

**A**ND in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast

angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me.

2 Behold, God *is* my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH *is* my strength and *my* song; he also *is* become my salvation.

might, to conquer all his foes, and accompany his word of truth with effectual demonstration and power unto the consciences of men, *and of the fear of the Lord*; being the perfect pattern of all godliness, and setting us an example that we should follow his steps: *and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord*; or of acute smell; intimating the thorough discernment that he shall possess of the hearts of men. See *Jahn*, i. 47. Note; (1.) When we have such a Redeemer, of wisdom and might to counsel and support us, how firm and unshaken ought our confidence in him to be? (2.) A quick understanding in the fear of God, is the gift of God; the brightest genius, without his grace, is in spiritual things dark and ignorant.

3. His throne shall be established in righteousness. As he knows men's hearts, he can judge of their characters, not by their outward appearance, but by their inward tempers and principles; detecting the hypocrite under all the disguises of outward formality and religious profession, *Matt. xxii. 18.* The poor and humbled sinner who flies to him for pardon and grace, he will justify by his infinite merit, and rescue the meek from their oppressors, whether Satan or wicked men, whom he will rebuke in equity, and smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, in warnings against those who place their affections upon it; and with the breath of his lips slay the wicked, by present judgments, or more terrible and eternal vengeance, *2 Thess. ii. 8.* In all which dispensations of mercy and judgment, the righteousness of his government shall appear as a glorious ornament; and his faithfulness, in accomplishing the promises made to his faithful people, and in completing the ruin denounced on his enemies, shall be manifested to his everlasting praise.

4. His kingdom shall enjoy the most happy union and concord: such a change will pass upon the spirits of men by the grace of Jesus, that the most persecuting, fierce, and untractable, shall become meek, lowly, and gentle as the lamb; all animosities subside, and no more venom remain in the human bosom. The knowledge of the Lord, which shall be diffused through the earth, shall produce this marvellous renovation of our fallen nature: and all united in love and peace, under the divine Redeemer, become one fold under one shepherd: the fulfilment of which appears now wherever the power of the gospel is known and felt; and we hope to see a day when not partially, but universally, this wonder-working Jesus shall make his power to appear, and all shall know him, love him, and serve him, from the least unto the greatest.

adly, We have a farther prophecy of the glory and enlargement of the Messiah's kingdom; which, whatever regard it may have to the times of Hezekiah, or the return of the Jews from Babylon, which was but a partial deliverance, certainly looks forward to the days of the gospel,

when Jews and Gentiles were incorporated in one church; and will have, we trust, its final accomplishment, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be come in, and all Israel shall be saved.

1. The great author of this salvation is *the root of Jesse*, the Lord Jesus, before called the rod and branch; for he is both *the root and offspring of David*, *Rev. v. 5.* *He shall stand for an ensign of the people*; lifted up in the preaching of the gospel among all nations, who shall be invited to lift under his banners; and *to it shall the Gentiles seek* for pardon and peace through his blood and merit, desiring to become willing subjects of his government, and to live in safety under his care and protection; *and his rest shall be glorious*; either Christ's, when, having in his sufferings and death finished the great work of atonement, he entered into his rest above in glory everlasting: or it refers to his believing people, who in him find a present happy rest to their souls from guilt and fear, and expect an eternal rest with him hereafter in his kingdom.

2. The completion of the salvation is described. Notwithstanding every opposition, God is said to do it *the second time*. The faithful are called *a remnant*, or those that remain, some in all ages having embraced the truth in its power; but now, more universally than ever, the gospel shall go forth into all lands, to gather from the four corners of the earth, and most distant Isles of the sea, the dispersed Jews, as well as the Gentiles, among whom they dwell. All enmity between Jew and Gentile, as subsisted of old between Judah and Ephraim, shall be at an end, all uniting in the service of their Redeemer; the inveterate enemies of Christ and his people, whether Papal or Pagan, &c. as the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, were to the Jews, shall be vanquished by the powerful word of the gospel, and be brought to the obedience of the faith. And Antichrist and his followers, compared to Egypt, for their enmity against the church, *Rev. xi. 8.* who will rise up to make war with the saints, shall be utterly destroyed, *Rev. xvi. 16—19.* as when God, by the rod of Moses, opened a way for his people to pass over, but overwhelmed their enemies in the Red Sea: and, every enemy being thus removed, converts from every side shall be added to the church daily, till all flesh shall see the glory of the Lord.

## C H A P. XII.

*Ver. 1—6.* In that day thou shalt say] Isaiah concludes this most noble prophecy, with a eucharistic doxology from the mouth of those who would share in the blessings of the great redemption before specified. This doxology is twofold; in the first part, the faithful in their own name and person, praise God, and bless him for the benefits of Salvation and consolation through Christ conferred upon them; *ver. 1, 2.* In the second part, they mutually exhort and encourage

3 Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.

4 And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted.

5 Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this *is* known in all the earth.

6 Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of

Zion: for great *is* the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.

### C H A P. XIII.

*God mastereth the armies of his wrath: he threateneth to destroy Babylon by the Medes. The desolation of Babylon.*

[Before Christ 713.]

**T**HE burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see.

encourage themselves and others to praise and celebrate their God and redeemer; ver. 3—6. Instead of *strength* in ver. 2. Vitringa reads *praise*. The third verse is thought to refer to Exod. xv. 27. and the meaning of it is, "That the believers, who already had obtained part in the salvation of Christ Jesus, should be most desirous of true and salutary wisdom; should seek for it most diligently, for their greater illumination, progress and confirmation in faith and hope; and should largely satisfy this their holy desire, their spiritual thirst, from the pure wells or fountains of the word of grace and salvation, opened to them by wise and faithful teachers, to their exceeding joy, pleasure, and consolation: from these wells should the doctrine of Salvation flow, they should drink of it fully, and at length, the veil being removed, should understand the secrets of the law and the prophets, which hitherto had been hidden from them." See the song of Moses upon the deliverance of the Israelites from Pharaoh and the Egyptians; the songs of Zechariah and Mary, Luke, i. 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. Rev. xv. 3. and Vitringa.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, As Israel, escaped from the Red Sea, when they beheld the floating corpses of the Egyptians, sung praises for their deliverance; with greater joy shall God's faithful people adore the power and grace of their exalted Lord.

1. For the blessed change that has passed. *Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me;* not that we must impute to God our infirmities, as that anger, such as dwells in our bosom, knows a place in his: we speak after the manner of men; God's anger is his righteous purpose to punish sin. We have by our sins deserved punishment; but when God turns us to himself, we feel a blessed alteration, and, no longer terrified as before, rejoice in the comfort of his salvation. *Note;* (1.) Every true believer will own how often and how justly he has by his sins provoked God's wrath and indignation against him. (2.) The deeper views we have of our own guilt, the more enlarged will our hearts be with love, and our lips with praise, when we experience a sense of his returning favour. (3.) The pardon and reconciliation of the sinner's soul to God, is only through the blood and infinite merit of the Redeemer.

2. They will triumph in the strength engaged for them, *Behold,* with wonder and love I record it, *God is my salvation;* Jesus hath given himself for me, able to save to the uttermost; and on him alone I depend, renouncing every

other hope: *I will trust* with quietness and confidence, and not be afraid; though temptation and affliction war against me; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength, and my song; which, while I pay as the grateful tribute for his mercies, increases my own consolations; he also is become my salvation; I can wish for nothing more; he is all my salvation, and all my desire. *Note;* (1.) They who have God for their strength, need not dread who are their foes. (2.) Confidence in Christ's power and love will keep the mind easy amidst every storm. (3.) If God be our salvation, he deserves to be our song; yea, every faithful soul would, if it were possible, think eternity too short to speak his praise.

3. From what God hath done, we are encouraged to expect what he will continue to do; therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation, or the Saviour: in Christ are the living waters, all fulness dwells in him for his believing people's use; they have free access to him at all times; and it is both their duty and delight, by faith to draw continual supplies of grace from him, in the exercise of prayer, meditation, the word, and sacraments. Surely blessed are the people who are in such a case!

2dly, They who have learned God's praise, and know the blessedness of the employment, will be solicitous to stir up others to join in the grateful service. *In that day* when the soul's conversion, and especially in the great day when the Redeemer's glory shall appear in his universal dominion, shall ye say, praise the Lord, call upon his name, in every act of religious worship due to the exalted Jesus; declare his doings among the people, seek to diffuse the knowledge of his grace, the fulness of his atonement, the power of his Spirit, the glory of the purchased possession; make mention that his name is exalted above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come; and let him be thus exalted in every heart, by every tongue. Sing unto the Lord loud songs of praise, making melody in the heart to him; for he hath done excellent things; he hath offered himself a perfect sacrifice in our stead, vanquished sin, death, and hell for us, led our captivity captive, opened heaven's gates, and prepared thrones for his faithful people in glory everlasting: *this is known in all the earth,* by the gospel word preached among all nations. Cry out and shout, with the voice of triumphant exultation, thou inhabitant of Zion, the church of the faithful redeemed; for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee; there he delights to take up his abode, and there must reign till every foe is subdued, and every faithful

2 Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain, exalt the voice unto them, shake the hand, that they may go into the gates of the nobles.

3 I have commanded my sanctified ones, I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger, *even* them that rejoice in my highneis.

ful soul brought home. The expected end shall come, and in his eternal kingdom he will make the fullest displays of his excellent greatness to his glorified saints, and be the object of their everlasting praise. Amen and Amen!

C H A P. XIII.

The **SECOND** part of the prophecies of Isaiah, containing a wonderful account of God's dealings with the enemies of his church and people, begins at this chapter, and extends to the 24th. It comprises eight discourses. The *first* concerning the fate of Babylon, chap. xiii.—xiv. 28. The *second* concerning the destruction of the Philistines, chap. xiv. 28.—xxiii. The *third* concerning the Moabites, chap. xv. xvi. The *fourth* concerning the Syrians of Damascus, with whose calamity the destruction of the Ephraimites is connected, and the subsequent punishment of the Assyrians and Egyptians; chap. xvii. xviii. The *fifth* sets forth the fate and destruction of Egypt, in which is involved the calamity of the Ethiopians, chap. xix. xx. The *sixth* respects the empire of the Babylonians, and foretells its fall, with which are connected the calamities of Edom and Arabia Deserta, chap. xxi. The *seventh* denounces the affliction hanging over Judæa and Jerusalem from Sennacherib, chap. xxii. And the *eighth* describes the calamities and destruction of Tyre, chap. xxiii.

*Ver. 1.*] This prophecy respecting Babylon may be divided into two parts; the former part contained in the present chapter: wherein we have, *first*, the title, ver. 1.; *secondly*, the matter comprehended in this first part, which describes figuratively and strongly the calamity of Babylon, ver. 2—16. and in the subsequent verses confirms the former prediction. Vitringa is of opinion, from the great similarity of phrases particularly which is found in both, that this prophecy was delivered at the same time with the preceding one concerning Assyria, beginning chap. x. 5. The great design of delivering this and the following prophecies of the same kind was, *first*, to set forth the reasons of the divine justice in punishing the enemies of the church, in order to console the minds and confirm the faith of the pious. A *second* and more immediate design was, to comfort the minds of true believers against that sad and sorrowful event, the Babylonish captivity; and the *third* to announce, under this figure, the destruction of the spiritual Babylon, the whole kingdom of sin and Satan. See Rev. xiv. 8. xvii. 5. It is necessary for every reader who would completely understand the prophecies which respect the several states mentioned in this **SECOND** part, to make themselves well acquainted with the history of those states. The excellent and judicious Vitringa has affixed to his comment an historical account of each kingdom. We just subjoin from him a brief detail of the state of the Babylonish empire. The kingdom of Babylon was founded by Nimrod, who made Babel the seat of his empire: It was then occupied by the Arabs, who less regarded Babylon; but the Syrians, having founded their monarchy in the East,

seized the Babylonish empire, repaired, fortified, adorned and enlarged Babylon, and at first, most likely, governed that province by nobles or deputies, and then placed kings over it, among whom Nabonassar was famous. Those kings became obnoxious to the Assyrians; and afterwards shook off their yoke. It is uncertain whether *Merodach-baladan* was the first who did so, or the kings who followed *Affar-Addin*, and principally Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar; the Medes and other nations having before, and perhaps on account of the slaughter of Sennacherib, led them away in their defection from the Assyrians: this was the first step of the greatness of the Babylonish empire. The valour and prosperity of the two kings after Affar-addin,—Nabopolassar, and his son Nebuchadnezzar, very much advanced the dignity of this empire. At length, Ninus being cut off by the Medes, and the Chaldees assisting them, this kingdom and empire was entirely established; for as the Medes, after the destruction of Ninus, had all Asia beyond the Tygris subject to them, except Susiana, the Babylonish kings ruled over all Asia on this side the Tygris, as far as the river Halys and Egypt. See Vitringa, and the Universal History, vol. iv.

*The burden of Babylon*] This inscription is not so much of a new prophecy as of a new book of prophecies, contradistinguished from the former book, which also has its inscription; but we have here a different word used, **מַשָּׂא** *massaa*, the *burden*, of *Babylon*, which Vitringa renders, the *sentence upon*, or *delivered concerning Babylon*. Bishop Newton observes, (*Prophecies*, vol. i. p. 354.) that it is remarkable, that the prophecies uttered against any city or country often carry the inscription of the *burden* of that city or country; and by *burden* is commonly understood a threatening *burdensome* prophecy, big with ruin and destruction; which, like a dead weight, is hung upon the city or country to sink it. But the word **מַשָּׂא** *massaa*, in the original is of more general import: sometimes it signifies a prophecy at large, sometimes a prophecy of good as well as of evil, as in Zech. xii. 1. sometimes it is translated a *prophecy*, where there is no prophecy, but only a grave moral sentence; and sometimes it is used of the author, as well as the subject of a prophecy. The word **מַשָּׂא** *massaa*, in the original is derived from the verb **נָסָא** *nasa*, which signifies to *take* or *lift up*, or *bring*; and the proper meaning of it is, any weighty important matter, or sentence, which ought not to be neglected; but is worthy of being carried in the memory and deserves to be *lifted up* and uttered with emphasis. See Rev. ii. 24. By *Babylon* we are to understand not only the city of that name, but the whole empire. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 2, 3. Lift ye up a banner*] In this beginning of the discourse we have, *first*, a figurative declaration of the causes, principal as well as instrumental, of the judgment to be brought upon Babylon; wherein God is introduced as a supreme general, delivering his commands to his ministers to collect a strong and numerous army, which would

scye

4. The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together: the LORD of hosts mustereth the host of the battle.

5 They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, *even* the LORD, and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land.

6 ¶ Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.

7. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt:

8 And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames.

9 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.

10 For the stars of heaven and the con-

serve as an instrument of executing that severe judgment which he had decreed against the Babylonians. We have this command in the present verses, and the ready execution of the command in ver. 4, 5. For the analysis of the second part, see on the sixth verse. There seems to be no doubt but that God is the speaker in these verses. See Jer. 1. 9. It is more doubtful who are those addressed: some think the Medes and Persians; but they cannot be the persons directly addressed, because they constitute the army which was to be collected for the execution of this decree: Others have therefore concluded, that the *angels*, the ministers of God's providence, are to be understood; but Vitringa observes very justly, that in passages like this, which are in a measure dramatic, there is no need to be so solicitous for the application of every minute particular. The general meaning of the passage is, that God would take care to effect that by his secret providence, which men are used to effect by their ministers and agents. Instead of *sanctified ones*, Bishop Lowth reads *enrolled warriors*, in the third verse; and instead of *even them*, &c.—*those that exult in my greatness*. Herodotus says remarkably of the Medes and Persians, that they thought themselves to be of all men the most excellent in all things, *αθροτων μακρω τα κερτα αριστους*. lib. i. p. 64. And in Ammianus Marcell. lib. xxiii. cap. 6. we have a character of this people, which remarkably coincides with the expression of the prophet. See Vitringa.

Ver. 4, 5. *The noise of a multitude, &c.*] The prophet here relates three things, the sudden effects of the divine command; first, the collection and congregation which God had destined to execute his judgments. *There is a noise of tumult in the mountains; the appearance of much people; the voice of the tumult of the kingdoms of nations gathered together*. No sooner had the Almighty given the command, than the multitude assembles to his banners. Secondly, We have this army disposed in order, and reviewed by its supreme general; *The Lord of hosts mustereth, or revieweth the host of the battle*: Thirdly, The motion and expedition of this army, immediately accoutred for the march against Babylon: *They march from a far country, from the extremity of the heavens; even JEHOVAH, and the instruments of his wrath to destroy this whole land*. See Jer. 1. 25. Media is called a far country, &c. in the usual style of Scripture for any distant place; chap. v. 26. Bishop Newton observes it was foretold, that various nations should unite against Ba-

bylon; that they should come from a far country; and that among others they should be the kingdoms of *Ararat, Minni, and Aschenaz*. Jer. li. 27. that is the Armenians, Phrygians, and other nations; and accordingly Cyrus's army consisted of various nations besides Medes and Persians, among whom were those very people whom he had conquered before, and obliged to attend him in this expedition.

Ver. 6. *Howl ye, &c.*] We have here, in this latter member of the first part of the discourse, a premonition to the Babylonians concerning their approaching calamity; ver. 6. Secondly, the effects of the expedition of their enemies against them are set forth; the stupor, *consternation*, and despair of the Babylonians, ver. 7, 8. the highest calamity, joined with the greatest evils, falling upon the Babylonians, and the utter subversion of their state; with the causes, namely, their grievous crimes; which calamity is first proposed, ver. 9—12. and then heightened by new figures and sentences indicating its greatness; ver. 13—16. It has been observed by Bishop Lowth, that the prophetic writings seem peculiarly excellent in exciting terror; and, though Isaiah generally employs his pen in representing images of pleasure and joy; yet this apostrophe, beginning with the present verse, and ending with the 13th, shews that no one is superior to him in exciting the passion of terror. See his 21st Prelection.

Ver. 7, 8. *Therefore, &c.*] What other effect could the premonition concerning the approach of such formidable enemies produce, than consternation and dismay? So the prophet informs us, eloquently describing in this period the consternation of the Babylonians upon the report of the expedition undertaken against them. This is the general meaning of the figurative expressions made use of in these verses, which are all of easy explication. See Jer. 1. 43. Deut. xx. 8. Pl. xlvi. 6. Jer. xlix. 24. The last phrase, which is literally, *Every one is astonished at another, with inflamed face, or their faces are of flames*, signifies that through the agitation of their passions, their faces were kindled as it were into flames, and bespoke the fear and anguish of their minds; each looking upon the other with a face glowing as scarlet, his mind in the utmost perturbation through anxiety and despair. The reader cannot but remark the strength and elegance of the expression. See Vitringa.

Ver. 9—12. *Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, &c.*] The prophet

stellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.

11 And I will punish the world for *their* evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

12 I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.

13 Therefore I will shake the heavens, and

the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of Hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.

14 And it shall be as the chafed roe, and as a sheep that no man taketh up: they shall every man turn to his own people, and flee every one into his own land.

15 Every one that is found shall be thrust through; and every one that is joined *unto them* shall fall by the sword.

16 Their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives ravished.

prophet begins here to describe the calamity itself coming upon the Babylonians, but in figures, according to his manner, grand, and adapted to raise a terrible image of that calamity. We have the proposition in the ninth verse, and the enarration of it in the three following. The proposition contains both a confirmation of the approach of *the day of the Lord*, and a general idea of its sorrowful attributes. The first is set forth in the words, *Behold, the day of the Lord cometh*; in which the prophet plainly alludes to the sixth verse; and the phrase means, the whole time destined by the divine councils for the chastisement of the Babylonians. See Jer. l. 31. The attributes of this day are *fierceness, wrath, hot anger*, &c. phrases chosen to express in the most lively manner the greatness of the approaching calamity; the first and principal cause whereof he teaches to be the divine justice, about to take severe vengeance upon the Babylonians, whose crimes, we learn from this and other prophets, were particularly pride and luxury, cruelty and inhumanity, idolatry and superstition, and, above all, their sins against the people of God, his religion and sanctuary, and so against God himself. See Jer. li. 24, 34, 35, &c. The enarration of the three following verses is so constructed, that though the basis of the discourse is figurative, yet the proper expressions are mixed with the metaphorical ones. In the 10th verse the calamity to be brought upon the Babylonians is described under the figure of a dreadful tempest, inducing such a face of things in the heavens as the prophet here describes. See ver. 13. Ezek. xxxii. 7. and Vitringa's Comment on Rev. vi. 12. The general meaning of the prophet is, that a most grievous calamity should come upon the Babylonians, which should deprive them of all light; that is to say, of all joy and consolation, as well as of the causes of them; and should fill them with sorrow and distress, and a fearful sense of the divine wrath poured forth from heaven upon them. See Job, xviii. 5. Besides, that their state and government should be utterly subverted, their religion and polity entirely overthrown. This is meant by the darkening of the *stars*, the *sun*, &c. metaphors which are fully explained in the 11th verse; *And I will visit upon this evil world, and upon these wicked, their iniquity*, &c. We cannot help thinking of the pride of Nebuchadnezzar, and his remarkable fate, when we read the latter part of the 11th verse. Bishop Warburton observes, that the prophetic style seems to be a speaking hiero-

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glyphic. In the tropical hieroglyphics, a *star* was the symbol of a *king* or a *god*; and to convince us that the figurative style of the prophets was derived thence, we should take notice, that they frequently call empires, kings, and nobles, by the names of the heavenly luminaries, the sun, moon, and stars; their temporary disasters or entire overthrows by eclipses and extinctions, and the destruction of the nobility by stars falling from heaven. See Matt. xxiv. 29. The 12th verse admits of a twofold sense: *First*, that there shall be so great a slaughter, that but few men shall remain, who, on this account, will become extremely precious, and more valuable than *gold*. The *second*, that the Medes and Persians should be so cruel and relentless, as not to be induced by any price to spare the Babylonians, so that a man will not be able to redeem his life for even the best gold, the *gold of Ophir*. Vitringa prefers the last sense, which he thinks is confirmed by the 17th verse.

Ver. 13—16. *Therefore I will shake the heavens*] Every one who reads and compares these words with those preceding, must observe, that they contain an explanation of what the prophet had said concerning the mighty storm to be raised against the Babylonians; so that here the same subject is continued and amplified. The same figure is employed in the 13th verse, setting forth the manifestation of the divine justice as the cause of the calamity, the effects of which are related in the following verses; and in the 14th the fear and flight of the Babylonians, in consequence of that fear. *And every one shall be as a goat driven away, and as sheep whom no man takes the pains to collect together. They shall look every man to his own people, and shall flee every one to his own land.* The metaphor is taken from a dispersed flock of timid sheep and goats; and the prophet refers to those inhabitants in Babylon who were of different nations, and had settled there. See Jer. l. 28. The next effect is, the slaughter and desolation of those who should be found; ver. 15, 16. *Every one that is joined unto them*, according to some, means those soldiers who were called in and hired to their assistance: see Jer. l. 30—32. Vitringa, however, seems to prefer the interpretation of Kimchi, who renders it, *And every one who is fainting [sick or near to death]*: as if the prophet had said, "Not only they who are *found*, who are at hand, *strong* and in health, shall be thrust through with the sword, but also the *fainting* and *dying*: who, though in a state

3 Z

" without

17 Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and *as for gold*, they shall not delight in it.

18 *Their bows also shall dash the young men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare children.*

19 ¶ And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Go-

morrah.

20 It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there.

21 But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there.

22 And the wild beasts of the islands shall

“without hope to escape death, will not be able to obtain from the cruel conqueror, that they may pay this debt to nature. They too shall fall by his bloody and relentless hand.”

*Ver. 17, 18. Behold, I will stir up the Medes*] Here follows the second part of this prophecy; in which, what the prophet had foretold principally in figure, is here plainly related; and is easily divided, as it contains the antecedent and consequent, the cause and effect. The antecedent, or efficient causes of the evil to come, are the Medes and Persians, raised up by God himself against the Babylonians, and described from their ruling principle, extremely full of cruelty and avidity of revenge, ver. 17, 18. The consequence is, the desolation of Babylon, and the calamity to be brought upon it, ver. 19—22. The expression in the 18th verse, *Their bows also shall dash the young men to pieces, might be rendered, And they shall with their bows dash to pieces the children*: according to the Vulgate, *They shall kill their little ones with their arrows*: cruel and relentless, and thirsting only for blood, no money will be able to bribe them; no gold or silver be able to satiate their thirst of destruction. Ancient historians assure us, that the Medes and Persians were thus notorious for their cruelty, and also that they carried remarkably large bows, and were eminent for their skilfulness in the use of them. Bishop Newton observes, that at the time when Isaiah wrote this prophecy, the Medes were a people of no account, forming only a province under the king of Assyria, and not erected into a separate kingdom till the time of Dioces, about the 17th year of king Hezekiah. They afterwards became a very considerable people, and made up the principal part of the army which was brought against Babylon by Cyrus, whose mother was a Mede. When Babylon was taken by Darius, he ordered 3000 of the principal men to be crucified, and thereby fulfilled the prophecies of the cruelty which the Medes and Persians should use towards the Babylonians, contained in this passage, and in Jer. l. 42. See Prophec. vol. i. p. 295.

*Ver. 19—22. And Babylon, the glory*] The prophet in this eloquent passage describes to us the consequence of the fury of the enemy raised up by God against Babylon; namely, the devastation and desolation of Babylon; and that extreme and everlasting; so as to exclude all hope of the restoration of this once magnificent city to its former state. The prophet heightens the desolation of Babylon by the consideration of its former great and flourishing state; *Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the ornament of the*

*excellency of the Chaldees.* According to Herodotus, this city was 480 furlongs or sixty miles in compass. By one means or other it became so celebrated as to give name to a very large empire; and its beauty, strength, and grandeur, its walls, temples, palaces, and hanging gardens, the banks of the river, and the artificial canals and lake made for draining of that river when it overflowed, are described with such pomp and magnificence by heathen authors, that it might deservedly be reputed one of the wonders of the world. This prophecy has been most remarkably fulfilled; both ancient geographers, and modern travellers, informing us, that they cannot trace even its ruins, or fix upon the spot where it once stood. St. Jerome informs us from a certain Elamite, who had been in this place, that Babylon was converted into a royal chace for hunting and breeding wild beasts, which was an exact accomplishment of the words of the prophet, ver. 21. *Wild beasts of the desert shall dwell there*: he adds, *Their houses shall be full of doleful creatures, and dragons shall cry in their pleasant places*: and Benjamin of Tudela, a Jew, in his Itinerary, written above 700 years ago, asserts, “Babylon is now laid waste, excepting the ruins of Nebuchadnezzar’s palace, which men are afraid to enter, on account of the scorpions which have taken possession of it.” This account is confirmed by Rauwolf, who informs us, that the supposed ruins of the tower of Babylon are so full of venomous creatures, that no one dares approach nearer to them than half a league; and, to sum up the evidence of the completion of this prophecy, Mr. Hanway informs us, that the ruins of this city are so much effaced, that there are hardly any vestiges of them to point out its situation. What makes the present desolate condition of this place the more wonderful is, that Alexander the Great intended to have made it the seat of his empire, and actually set men to work to rebuild the temple of Belus, to repair the banks of the river, and to reduce the waters again to their old channel; but he met with too many difficulties. How is Babylon become a desolation! How wonderful are such predictions, compared with the events! And what a convincing argument of the truth and divinity of the Holy Scriptures! Well might God allege this as a memorable instance of his prescience, and challenge all the false gods, and their votaries, to produce the like; ch. xiv. 21. xvi. 10. And indeed where can be found a similar instance, but in Scripture, from the beginning of the world to this day? See Bishop Newton on the *Prophecies*, diss. 10. and the *Observations* on S. S. page 63.

REFLECTIONS.



cry in their desolate houses, and dragons near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged in their pleasant palaces: and her time is longed.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, A new vision here is given the prophet concerning the fate of the neighbouring kingdoms; and as the captivity of the Jews in Babylon approached, they have this prophecy to comfort them before the time arrives,—that the rod of their oppressor should be broken. It is called *the burden of Babylon*, a prophecy concerning it, denouncing her heavy doom, crushed in pieces under the combined forces of Media and Persia; and this Isaiah saw in prophecy clearly revealed to him.

1. God gives the command; his standard is unfurled; the forces haste to join their colours, and he musters them armed for the battle. The kings of Media and Persia, with their officers, were employed to summon the soldiers, beckon them to enlist, and lead them to the gates of the nobles, the proud walls of Babel; but it was God's secret impulse which stirred up their spirit, strengthened them for the battle, and crowned their arms with success.

2. The persons employed are his *sanctified ones*, the Medes and Persians; not that they were therefore gracious souls, but raised up to serve his purposes, and qualified by him for their work: his *mighty ones*, Cyrus and Darius, who were instruments in his hand, and clothed with strength to execute his decree: *even them that rejoice in my highness*, or, as the words will bear to be rendered, *that rejoice my highness*; they rejoiced in their successes, whereby God was glorified; and a vast army followed them from different nations, from the ends of the earth, the farthest parts of their dominion, and very distant from Babylon; but, when sent on God's errand, no distance or danger could deter them.

3. The design of them is, as *weapons of the Lord's indignation*, to destroy the whole land of Chaldea, and Babylon the metropolis. *Note*; When God gives the word against a sinful nation, to pluck up and to destroy, his armies are quickly ready, and resistance is vain.

2dly, The destruction of Babylon being commanded, we have an awful account of its accomplishment.

1. It is the day of the Lord's wrath, and therefore must be terrible; and destruction from the Almighty, and therefore irresistible. Though God for just correction suffered his people to be brought into bondage, he would fully avenge the ill usage they had received.

2. Dismay and terror would overtake the hosts of Babylon. Howling for distress, and trembling, their courage should fail them: pangs like those of a travailing woman should seize them, and each increase the panic by reciprocally communicating their fears; their faces should be dark, as if burnt to a coal, or pale as flames; the terrible wrath and fierce anger of the Lord upon them, and certain ruin, the wages of sin, approaching; the very heavens black and lowering, and the bright luminaries hid; or this is figuratively expressed to describe the ruin of their king and princes, and the dreadful gloom of horror which surrounded them, while no opening appeared for their escape; and all should be embittered by conscious guilt, of which this is the just punishment. God will lay low the arrogance of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, and bring their pride into the dust; their country and

capital so ruined, that scarcely a man should be left; or so merciless their conquerors, that no ransom would engage them to spare their captives. The thunders above, and the quaking earth beneath, should help forward their destruction; or by these may be signified the utter dissolution of the government. Like a chafed roe their warriors should flee; and as a sheep straying from the flock, defenceless, becomes a prey to the wolf, so should they be devoured. Their auxiliary forces shall desert their sinking cause, and, glad to escape with life to their own country, leave the devoted city to ruin. *Note*; (1.) That is complete misery upon earth, where the terrors of a guilty conscience are added to the heavy judgments of affliction. (2.) Sin, sin is the cause of all human wretchedness. (3.) They who never trembled before shall in the day of God be overwhelmed; and the boldest countenance turn pale at God's bar. (4.) When God devotes a nation to ruin, all her allies will desert her, and fly as from a falling house.

3. The executioners of God's vengeance approach: the Medes, more thirsty for blood than for the spoil, shall raven like lions; universal massacre shall ensue of all that were found in arms, whether Babylonians or auxiliaries. The laws of humanity find no place in a city taken by storm; and God in just retaliation for the violences offered to his people, (Lam. v. 11, &c.) will suffer the children of Babylon to be dashed in pieces. *Note*; (1.) When the native cruelty of the heart is unrestrained, no beast of the forest is more savage than man. (2.) If we shudder at the infant's miseries, let us remember how bitter and evil a thing sin is, and read in their sufferings a pregnant evidence of original guilt. (3.) They who are companions with the wicked, will share in their plagues.

3dly, The inimitably lively and striking images of the utter desolation of Babylon here displayed, cannot be read without admiration.

1. Her former towering height of glory serves to strengthen the contrast which should be evidenced by her fall, even the fall of Babylon, the beauty of Chaldaea. Utter destruction, like that of Sodom and Gomorrah, approached. Instead of crowded streets, not an inhabitant should remain among the dreary ruins for ever: instead of a fertile soil, such barrenness should succeed, that not even an Arab's tent, or a shepherd's fold, should be seen. Those late proud palaces, where riot, mirth, and pleasure reigned, abandoned, ruinous, are become the dens of ravening beasts; and owls, dragons, satyrs, and every doleful creature, occupy the desolate mansions.

2. The nearness of this heavy judgment is intimated, for the comfort of God's Israel when in their captivity. It was more than two hundred years from the time of the prophecy; but with God that is but a moment; it would be quickly at hand, *for her days shall not be prolonged*, but a final period put to Babylon's prosperity and power; yea, to her very being. And thus shall mystical Babylon also perish, when the day of her recompence shall arrive, Rev. xviii. 2. 4. 21.

## C H A P. XIV.

*God's merciful restoration of Israel: their triumph in the fall of the king of Babylon. God's purpose against Assyria. Palestine is threatened.*

[Before Christ 712.]

**F**OR the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob.

2 And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the LORD for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they

were, and they shall rule over their oppressors.

3 ¶ And it shall come to pass in the day that the LORD shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve,

4 That thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased.

5 The LORD hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers.

6 He who smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke, he that ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted, and none hindereth.

7 The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they break forth into singing.

## C H A P. XIV.

*Ver. 1. For the Lord will have mercy*] The prophet here continues his discourse concerning Babylon, wherein we have a continuation of the prophecy concerning the fall of the Babylonish empire and its rulers, ver. 1—23. and a prophecy interwoven, concerning the great slaughter which the king of Assyria should meet with on the mountains of Israel; ver. 24—27. the former part describes, *first*, the fruit or consequence of the fall of Babylon; that is to say, the perfect deliverance of the people of God; ver. 1—3. and *secondly*, continues the prediction concerning the fall of the Babylonish kings, ver. 4—20. and the destruction of Babylon, ver. 21—23. This chapter is not only connected with that preceding by the particle *for*, but by the argument in the last clause; *her time is near to come*, &c. A reason, therefore, is here given, not only for the fall of Babylon, but also for the speedy approach of that fall, which was not to be delayed, because the deliverance of the church, determined by God, depended upon it. These verses exhibit to us as well the antecedent as the consequent blessings to be conferred upon the people of God after the fall of Babylon; which the prophet piously considers in their cause; namely, the *mercy* of JEHOVAH. The antecedent benefits are three; 1. The choosing of the house of Jacob. 2. The placing of them in their own land. 3. Rest from grief, fear, and the hard bondage of former times (ver. 3.). The consequent benefits are also threefold: 1st, the joining of proselytes to the people of God, by the communion of the same religion, ver. 1. 2dly, The offices of humanity, charity, and benevolence, to be shewn them by certain people, who should bring them to their own place, ver. 2. 3dly, The hereditary possession of many nations who had vexed them, joined with dominion over them, ver. 2. There can be no doubt that this prophecy refers to the restoration of the Jews after the Babylonish captivity; but as that restoration was figurative of their great and future one under the Gospel, these words, most likely, have a remote reference hereto. See Rom.

xv. 27.

*Ver. 4—7. Thou shalt take up this proverb*] The latter

member of this discourse is employed in a figurative enarration of the fall of the kings of Babylon, ver. 4—21. and of Babylon itself, ver. 22, 23. The prophet introduces his prediction concerning the fall of the kings of Babylon by a poetic or dramatic song, in which the church congratulates herself and all other people on this event: in this song he elegantly represents, as in a scene, various persons speaking; as, *first*, the church, or people of God, ver. 4—7. *secondly*, the cedars of Lebanon, ver. 8. *thirdly*, the spirits of departed kings and princes, ver. 9—11. and *fourthly*, the church again, which closes the scene. Bishop Lowth observes, in his 17th Prelection, that the prophet, after having described the deliverance of the Israelites from their Babylonish slavery, and their return to their own country, introduces them on a sudden, as singing a triumphal ode upon the fall of the Babylonish monarch; which abounds with the most splendid images, and is carried on by a succession of *protopopæias*, the most beautiful of their kind. The poem opens with a sudden exclamation of the Jews, expressing their joy and admiration on the unexpected vicissitude of their affairs, and the death of the tyrant: the earth itself, and its productions, join in the triumph; the *fir-trees* and *cedars* of Lebanon (under which images are represented *kings* and *princes* in the ancient hieroglyphics, and in the parabolical style) exult with joy, and insult the declining power of this cruel enemy, ver. 7, 8. After this follows a very bold figure, or *protopopœia*, in which *hell*, or the infernal regions, are represented under the image of a person rousing the spirits of the princes and kings, its inhabitants; who immediately arise from their thrones, and go to meet the king of Babylon: as he approaches them, they insult and deride him, and seek for solace in his calamity, ver. 9—11. Nothing can be more awful and tremendous than the images in these verses. All the descriptions of the state of the dead in the Jewish rabbins seem to be drawn from their *graves*; (concerning which see the note on ch. v. 11—14.) the sides of those subterraneous caverns were cut into separate cells, which were adorned with carvings, and appropriated to the reception of a single body. Let us imagine then that

8 Yea, the fir-trees rejoice at thee, *and* the cedars of Lebanon, *saying*, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us.

9 Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet *thee* at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, *even* all the chief ones of the earth: it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations.

10 All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us?

11 Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, *and* the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee.

12 How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! *how* art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!

13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

15 Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.

16 They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, *and* consider thee, *saying*, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms;

17 *That* made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; *that* opened not the house of his prisoners?

18 All the kings of the nations, *even* all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house.

19 But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, *and as* the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcase trodden under feet.

20 Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou hast destroyed thy land, *and* slain thy people: the seed of evil-doers shall never be renowned.

21 Prepare slaughter for his children for the iniquity of their fathers; that they do not rise, nor possess the land, nor fill the face of the world, with cities.

22 For I will rise up against them, faith

we behold one of these vast, dreary, sepulchral caves, in which the *Gentile kings* are deposited in their respective cells, with their arms placed under their heads, and their attendants lying near them,—for it was a Jewish opinion, that the whole armies of those nations which were destroyed, descended into the regions of the dead together.—Lo! the king of Babylon is introduced: they all rise from their thrones, go to meet him, and as he advances thus address him, *Art thou become weak as we are? art thou become like unto us?*—But no words, except those of his own, can express the sublimity of the prophet's ideas. After this the Jews are introduced as speaking again; and in an exclamation, agreeable to the funeral rites of the ancients, with great elegance aggravate the misery of his fall, ver. 12. *How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!* Lucifer is said to set before the morning-star rises; and it is observable, that the Hebrew שחר *shachar*, does not signify *morning* or *daylight*, but the twilight which precedes the appearance of the morning-star. See ch. xiii. 10. They then introduced this fallen Lucifer, this king of Babylon, as speaking in his own person, and, by his mad boasting of his invincible power, still heightening the greatness of his fall. *I will exalt myself*, says he, *above the stars of God*, above all other princes; *I will sit upon the mount of the congregation*, &c. ver. 13, 14. That is, “I will sit triumphant in the temple of the God of Israel himself, which was built on mount Moriah, and

“on the north side of Jerusalem.” But, as if this was not sufficient, other speakers are brought in: some persons are introduced, who find the carcase of the Babylonish king, and, after viewing him with the greatest attention, scarcely know him again, ver. 15—17. They then reproach him with having the common rites of burial denied him on account of his cruelty and barbarity, and execrate both his name, race, and posterity, ver. 18—21. The whole is concluded with an awful and tremendous speech from God himself, wherein he threatens perpetual excision and destruction to the king of Babylon, his posterity, and the city itself, and confirms this denunciation, as irrevocable and immutable, by the solemn sanction of an oath. Vitringa renders the 21st verse, *Prepare slaughter unto his children for the iniquity of their fathers: Let them not rise up to possess the land, that enemies should fill the face of the world.* The meaning is, “Take care, lest if you spare his children, they raise themselves again, and obtain possession of the land, filling the world with enemies, prepared to avenge their father's injuries, and to spread around all kinds of confusion.” See Bishop Lowth's Prelections.

Ver. 22, 23. *For I will rise*, &c. Thus the prophet ends this remarkable song, and again informs us, what he had set forth in the first part of this prophecy, that the judgment should not rest in the royal house, but should pass to all the other inhabitants of Babylon; who should also be wholly cut off; and the city itself entirely wasted and destroyed.

the LORD of Hosts, and cut off from Babylon the name, and remnant, and son, and nephew, saith the LORD.

23 I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water: and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the LORD of Hosts.

24 ¶ The LORD of Hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand:

25 That I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him un-

derfoot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders.

26 This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations.

27 For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?

28 In the year that king Ahaz died was this burden.

29 ¶ Rejoice not thou, whole Palestina, because the rod of him that smote thee is

stroyed. See the note on chap. xiii. 19—22. It is remarkable, that the river Euphrates having been turned out of its course by Cyrus when he took Babylon, and never afterwards restored to its former channel, all that side of the country was flooded by it, and thence becoming boggy and marshy, this prophecy was literally fulfilled, though it was delivered by Isaiah one hundred and sixty years before, and at a time when Babylon was one of the greatest and most flourishing cities in the world: so eminently was that strong and sublime expression verified, *I will sweep it with the besom of destruction.* See Vitringa, and Newton on the Prophecies.

*Ver. 24—27. The Lord of Hosts hath sworn*] This period, though of a peculiar and different, is not of a totally foreign argument: it contains the epilogue and conclusion of the foregoing prophecy. As what the prophet foretold concerning the destruction of Babylon might justly seem great beyond expectation, he was desirous that the truth of the prediction should be collected from another remarkable and not dissimilar divine judgment, which should precede the completion of this prophecy; namely, the wonderful slaughter which the king of Assyria should meet with in Canaan itself, as an example of the divine indignation, and a pledge of the truth of similar predictions, denouncing the destruction of the enemies of the people of God. This is the scope and sense of the present period; which moreover contains a preface or introduction to the divine oath, and the subject matter of that oath; ver. 24, 25. together with the basis and foundation of it, the divine purpose and power; ver. 26, 27. And no one can doubt of the completion of this prophecy, who reads the account of the destruction of Sennacherib's army. See chap. xxxvi. and xxxvii. Vitringa has annexed to his explanation of the letter of this prophecy, an account of the mystical sense of it; which he considers as referring to the spiritual Babylon or papal power. See 2 Thess. ii. 4. and the book of Revelation.

*Ver. 28. In the year that king Ahaz died, was this burden*] We have here the second sermon of this second book; in which the prophet denounces judgment against the Philistines, exulting in the prosperous state of their affairs under the reign of Ahaz, and conceiving, on the death of that king, when this prophecy was delivered, still greater hopes

of increasing prosperity; and foretels the grievous calamities they should suffer, as well from the son of Ahaz, as from the Assyrians; thus humbling their pride and boasting, and encouraging the pious and afflicted Jews with the hope of better times. This discourse consists of an inscription in this verse, and of the body of the prophecy, ver. 29—32: in the former member whereof the prophet deborts the Philistines from vain and empty boasting, a proof of their approaching calamity; the consequence of which would be joyful to the pious and afflicted; ver. 29, 30. In the latter member he recommends to them mourning for a similar reason, and unfolds the new judgment which should complete the preceding one, with the hope of the pious; ver. 31, 32. Concerning the subject and the time of this prophecy there can be no doubt, as they are both set forth by the prophet. Respecting its completion we shall speak in the subsequent notes. See Vitringa, and the *Universal History*, vol. ii. p. 217.

*Ver. 29. Rejoice not, &c.*] This prophecy against the Philistines is conceived in a form familiar with Isaiah and the other prophets, of an immediate address to them, wherein they are admonished to refrain from joy either on account of the death of Ahaz, which might seem advantageous to the state of their affairs, or on account of the power of the Jewish kingdom's being weakened under Ahaz; by a reason drawn from the quality of his successor, who should strenuously vindicate the injuries brought by them upon the Jewish nation under Ahaz, and should repress their ferocity and pride. This appellation may be divided into three parts: *first*, the proposition, in which they are exhorted to receive modestly the news of the death of Ahaz; ver. 29.; *secondly*, the reason of the proposition, taken from the quality of the successor who should punish them; ver. 29.; *thirdly*, the consequence of their punishment, the security of the husbandman and the inhabitants of Judæa; ver. 30. Vitringa renders properly the first part of the 29th verse, *Rejoice not all of thee, O Palestine, because the rod smiting thee is broken.* Palestine was a southern and maritime tract of the land of Canaan, abounding with many noble cities, and among others inhabited by the Philistines. Foreign writers frequently call Judæa in general by this name. By the *cockatrice* it is agreed that Hezekiah is meant, who verified this prediction; *For*

Be

broken: for out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent.

30 And the first-born of the poor shall feed,

and the needy shall lie down in safety: and I will kill thy root with famine, and he shall slay thy remnant.

31 Howl, O gate: cry, O city; thou,

*he smote the Philistines even unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city. See 2 Kings, xviii. 8. and Vitringa.*

*Ver. 30. And the first-born of the poor.]* In these words we have the consequence of the destruction of the Philistines to be effected by Hezekiah, and a more distinct declaration of the judgment itself. The consequence was to be the secure and peaceful habitation of Judah, in those parts especially which had been long exposed to the incursions and depredations of this hostile nation; and for this very reason the prophet calls these inhabitants of Judæa *poor* and *needy*; denoting the husbandmen, under the reign of Ahaz, exhausted and reduced to the greatest distress, as God, under that impious prince, had delivered them up to desolation. 2 Chron. xxx. 7. But, every where emphatical in his expressions, the prophet calls them the *first-born of the poor*; that is to say, the very poorest. So in Job, the *first-born of death*, is the most violent and terrible of deaths, chap. xviii. 13. Some think, that by the *root* and the *remnant* are meant the nobles and the vulgar. Vitringa is of opinion, that the two words mean the same thing; as a root, when the branches are cut off, is that alone which remains of the tree; and that the prophet alludes to the weakening of the Philistines by the Assyrians, and the cutting off the remnant of them by Hezekiah. See ver. 22. and 2 Chron. xxxii. 23, &c. where the felicity of the reign of Hezekiah after the overthrow of the Assyrian in the land of Canaan is related. The time of this destruction of the Philistines was, according to Vitringa, after the overthrow of Sennacherib.

*Ver. 31, 32. Howl, O gate: &c.] Howl, O gate: cry, O city; all of thee is dissolved, O Palestine; for, &c.—And there shall not be a solitary one among his legions.* Vitringa: See also Bishop Lowth. In this latter part, a new calamity is denounced upon Palestine, to be brought upon it by the Assyrians; and in the 32d verse, the cause is explained why the Jews should be exempted from that calamity. The prophet sees as it were a thick cloud coming from the north, darkening the heaven, an emblem of the numerous army coming from that quarter against Palestine. Now he sees the messengers of this nation, as in a common danger, going to the king of Judæa, and deliberating concerning the common safety. While he beholds the first, he turns his discourse to one of the cities of the Philistines, which was most remarkable, and excites them to lamentation for this or for a new calamity; at the same time teaching the Jews what answer they should give the messengers of that nation upon this occasion. See Jeremiah, xlvii. 2. and Vitringa.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, It was peculiarly for Zion's sake that God visited her oppressors, both to avenge her quarrel, and by their ruin to procure the liberty of his people,

whom Cyrus, on his conquest of Babylon, sent back to their own land.

1. God encourages his people with promises of mercy in general, that they might not think, because of their sufferings, that they were utterly rejected.

2. He engages, in particular, to bring them once more into their own land; to increase their number by faithful proselytes, to open the hearts of Cyrus and his subjects to help them on their journey, see Ezra, i. 4. and to give them servants and handmaids out of the land of their captivity. Thus God having restored them with honour, and replenished them, they would no longer be under servitude, distressed and sorrowful, but enjoy a happy rest in the fertile land of Canaan. And this seems to look forward to the times of the Gospel, when, through the preaching of Jesus and his apostles, multitudes of Jews and Gentiles should be converted and brought home to the church, *the land of the Lord*, and lead their captivity captive; no more the servants of corruption, or distressed with terrifying and guilty fears; but entering into pardon, peace, and rest, through Jesus, here below, as an earnest of that eternal rest which remaineth for the faithful above.

2dly, The triumphs of God's people, and the wretchedness to which their conquerors shall be reduced, are here most elegantly displayed. The description is called a proverb, a taunting speech, full of sarcasm and irony.

1. With admiration and exultation the people of God behold the fall of Babylon, the golden city, full of splendor; and also of her oppressive king. For his wickedness, cruelty, and tyranny, God had broken his sceptre, and hurled him from his throne, overtaken by just judgment, and none either able or willing to deliver him. *Note:* (1.) Riches profit not in a day of wrath. (2.) When God in his determined justice seizes the sinner, none can stay his righteous vengeance, or deliver out of his hand.

2. The fall of this oppressive power would be the peace and joy of the nations of the earth. Their troubler removed, quietness would be restored, and with gladness the people would celebrate their deliverance. The very firs and cedars are represented as rejoicing, since now no feller would hew them down, to build gorgeous palaces for these proud monarchs. Or rather, the kings and princes of the earth, hereby represented, are happy to be delivered from the bondage and fears under which they groaned during the tyrannic sway of Babylon's monarchs. *Note:* Peace and quietness in a nation is matter of great thankfulness.

3. Whilst earth rejoices in being rid of such a burden, those who are in hell, or the state of the dead, are represented as welcoming the king of Babylon with sarcastic taunts to their dark abode. They are all in motion, hastening to congratulate him on his arrival. *It stirreth up the dead, Rephaim, the giants, the chief ones of the earth: these,* informed

whole Palestina, *art dissolved*: for there shall come from the north a smoke, and none shall be alone in his appointed times.

32 What shall *one* then answer the mes-

sengers of the nation? That the LORD hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it.

informed of his approach, are represented as going to meet him; and the kings of the nations, as rising from their thrones, in derision to pay him that homage which in his lifetime they had been obliged to render. These all with affected wonder shall say, *Art thou also become weak as we!* a boasted god, but found, like us, a dying worm. How short-lived is thy glory! how despicable thy end! Thy pomp is faded in the dust, thy music lost in groans, and thy gorgeous body, once clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day, is now loathsome in corruption, and meat for worms. How wondrous the change! *How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!* proud as the prince of darkness, like him once shining as the morning-star, and in glory exalted high as heaven, but now cut down even to the ground, low as the nations thou hast wasted. How vain thy former pride and boast! nothing once seemed too high for thy aspiring ambition: thou hast said, I will establish a monarchy as wide as the heavens, bring suppliant kings to the footstool of my throne, and sit as conqueror on Zion's holy mount; yea, not content with earthly dignity, affecting divine honours, as if thou couldst ascend above the clouds, and rival the Most High. But how different thy catastrophe! brought down to hell, and numbered among the dead! *Note*; (1.) Pride is the besom-fall of fallen man: since our first parents, affecting god-like wisdom, were undone, we have inherited their guilty ambition. (2.) They who go down to the grave in their iniquities, will be thrust down into hell as their eternal punishment.

4. The living can scarcely believe their own eyes, when they behold him fallen from his high estate, and weltering in his blood; so different his ghastly countenance, deformed with wounds, and pale in death, from what he once appeared; and therefore insulting over him they shall say, *Is this the man*, the mighty conqueror, who shook the thrones and humbled the monarchs of the earth; who by his ravages depopulated the nations, destroyed their cities, and made the world a wilderness, and whose captives groaned under a heavy yoke, without hope of being ever loosed? Yes; this is he, once higher than the highest, now more despicable than ever he was dignified. Whilst other kings in pomp are carried to the tomb, the clods of the valley made sweet unto them, and stately monuments erected over them to perpetuate their memory; destitute even of a grave, thy corpse is cast out as an abominable branch, and, like the raiment of those who are slain with the sword, clotted with blood, which none cared to touch as ceremonially unclean; trodden under foot as mire by men and horses in the battle, and afterwards cast into the pit, and covered with a heap of stones. Such shall be thy vile end, denied a place among the tombs of thy ancestors, because of thy wanton cruelty, murders, and arbitrary oppression; for this is God's righ-

teous decree, *that the seed of evil-doers shall never be renowned, or not for ever*, their momentary blaze of glory being quickly extinguished, and their honour laid in the dust. *Note*; (1.) In the blaze of conquest we admire the hero, and are apt to overlook the murderer, the robber, and the scourge of mankind. (2.) The pomp of a gorgeous sepulchre is a poor distinction; yet, for the punishment of iniquity to be denied a grave, is a brand of real infamy. (3.) Strange changes are soon brought about when God will work; and it is a wretched greatness to be proud of, which stands in so slippery a place, and may so quickly be dashed in pieces.

5. The utter ruin of the royal family, and Babylon the seat of their majesty, is declared. The Medes and Persians are commanded to prepare slaughter for them, to visit on them the sins of their fathers, and not spare the most distant branch, but utterly extirpate the name of the Babylonish monarchs, that they may no more succeed to the throne of their ancestors, or fill the world with cities to perpetuate their fame, or extend their grandeur; and their metropolis, utterly ruined, should become a marsh, and the abode of bitterns, swept with the besom of destruction, and scarce a stone left upon another: all which was literally accomplished.

The whole of this awful and terrible destruction also looks forward to the ruin of Babylon mystical, whose pride, impiety, tyranny, and cruelty, will meet with as condign punishment, and be matter of the like joy to the saints of God, as fully appears from the book of Revelations. Compare ver. 7, 8. with Rev. xv. 2, 3., xix. 2, 3. 20.; ver. 9, 10. with 2 Theff. ii. 4. 8., Rev. xiii. 4., xx. 10.; ver. 11. with Rev. xviii. 22.; ver. 12. with Rev. xi. 7., xiii. 7. 15., xviii. 21.; ver. 13, 14. with Rev. xviii. 7, 8., 2 Theff. ii. 4.; ver. 15, 16. with Rev. xix. 20; ver. 23. with Rev. xviii. 21, &c.

3dly, While the more distant events of the utter destruction of Babylon, and the deliverance of God's people, are expected, an earnest of their fulfilment is given in two signal instances of a nearer date, the destruction of Sennacherib's army, and the subdual of the Philistines.

1. The Assyrians shall be broken, when invading God's land, and be trodden under foot on the mountains of Israel, who now shall be delivered from the yoke of bondage, and, with the ruin of their oppressors, regain their freedom. This work God undertakes himself to accomplish, ratified by his solemn oath. His hand is stretched out upon the mighty army of Assyria, composed of all nations brought under her tyrannic sway: or this is his purpose throughout the earth, to punish universally the persecutors of his people. And who can defeat the counsels of infinite wisdom, or oppose the arm of Omnipotence? *Note*; They who are the enemies of God's people will smart for it.

CHAP. XV.

*The lamentable state of Moab.*

[Before Christ 712.]

**T**HE burden of Moab. Because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste, and brought to silence; because in the night Kir of Moab is laid waste, and brought to silence;

2 He is gone up to Bajith, and to Dibon, the high places, to weep: Moab shall howl over Nebo, and over Medeba: on all their heads shall be baldness, and every beard cut off.

3 In their streets they shall gird themselves with sackcloth: on the tops of their houses, and in their streets, every one shall howl, weeping abundantly.

4 And Heshbon shall cry, and Elealeh: their voice shall be heard even unto Jahaz: therefore the armed soldiers of Moab shall cry out; his life shall be grievous unto him.

5 My heart shall cry out for Moab; his fugitives shall flee unto Zoar, an heifer of three years old: for by the mounting up of Luhith with weeping shall they go it up; for in the way of Horonaim they shall raise up a cry of destruction.

6 For the waters of Nimrim shall be desolate: for the hay is withered away, the grass faileth, there is no green thing.

7 Therefore the abundance they have gotten, and that which they have laid up, shall they carry away to the brook of the willows.

CHAP. XV.

*Ver. 1. The burden of Moab*] In this and the next chapter, which contain the *third* discourse, the prophet, in a most lively manner, foretels the fate of the Moabites; wherein we have, *first*, the title prefixed to it, ver. 1. *Secondly*, the context, or body of the prophecy, ver. 1.—chap. xvi. 12. *Thirdly*, the conclusion, chap. xvi. 13, 14. The context, or body of the prophecy is two-fold: the *first* part sets forth at large the calamity impending over Moab—in this chapter; the *second* relates the causes of these evils, by way of counsel suggested to the Moabites; and, after giving the Jews hopes of a more prosperous state of their nation, repeats the same prediction, chap. xvi. 1—12. The first part is comprehended in three sentences of similar argument, which unfold both the evils coming upon the Moabites, and the consequence of them; lamentation, mourning, and distress; the *first* in ver. 1—4. the *second*, ver. 5—7. the *third*, ver. 8, 9. There can be no doubt that this prophecy literally refers to the Moabites, and Vitringa thinks it unquestionable from the last verse of the 14th chapter, that it was completed by the destruction brought upon the Moabites by Salmanezar, three years after its delivery. For the history of the Moabites, see Vitringa and the Univ. Hist. vol. ii. p. 125.

*Because in the night Ar of Moab*] From this to the fourth verse, we have the first sentence of the first part of this prophecy: wherein are an antecedent and consequent: *the antecedent*—the devastation of the principal cities of Moab, which should involve the whole nation in destruction: ver. 1. *the consequence*—the distress and common lamentation of the Moabites under this calamity. The prophet so orders his discourse in this prophecy, as if, being placed on a high mountain, he beheld the army of the Assyrians, suddenly, and contrary to all expectation, directing their course towards Moab; and in this unforeseen attack ravaging and plundering, rather than besieging the principal cities and fortifications of this country; while the Moabites, astonished at the report of this event, burst forth into weeping and lamentation, and hasten to

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the temples and altars of their god *Chemosh*, to implore his aid, making bare their heads, cutting off their hair, and filling all places with howling and lamentation, like desperate men; while some of them fall by the sword of the enemy, some of them fly towards Arabia; their goods, land, vineyards, &c. being left a spoil to the enemy and avenger. The article *כי* because, prefixed to this prophecy, may be rendered, *truly, certainly*; or it may be taken in its proper sense. *Because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste, he* (namely Moab, ver. 2.) *is gone up, &c.* But Vitringa thinks it more elegant and emphatical to render it affirmatively; *Truly in the night, &c.* Gen. iv. 24. 1 Sam. xiv. 39. Instead of, *and brought to silence*, Bishop Lowth reads *is undone*. Ar and Kir were two of the principal and best fortified cities of Moab: see chap. xvi. 7—11. where the latter is called *Kir-hariseh*,—*the city of the sun*, as they worshipped there the sun under the appellation of *Chemosh*. This destruction of Moab is said to have been *in the night*, which seems a metaphorical expression to denote the sudden and unexpected ruin which should come upon them like a thief in the night. See Job xxvii. 20. xxxiv. 25. The towns mentioned in the following verses belong to the Moabites; some of them have been mentioned in the preceding parts of the scripture; it is probable that they were remarkably famous for their high places, temples, and altars. The prophet closes the fourth verse with telling us that even the armed soldiers themselves, the warriors, and those who should defend the state, should lose all their spirit and courage, and join in the general lamentation and dismay. Ser Jer. xlviii. 34. 41. The last clause, *His life, &c.* might be rendered, *The soul of every one of them shall be in distress.*

*Ver. 5—7. My heart shall cry out for Moab*] Hitherto the prophet had set forth the lamentation of the Moabites; but seeing these future evils as it were present to his own mind, he compassionates their griefs, and declares his own participation of their sorrows: the meaning of the next clause is, “*His fugitives wander even unto Zoar, an heifer of three years old;*” that is to say, sending forth their cries

4 A “ by

8 For the cry is gone round about the borders of Moab; the howling thereof unto Eglaim, and the howling thereof unto Beer-elim.

9 For the waters of Dimon shall be full of blood: for I will bring more upon Dimon, lions upon him that escapeth of Moab, and upon the remnant of the land.

“by weeping and lamenting, like a heifer, &c.” *Three years old* is mentioned only to denote a full-grown heifer; the lowing of which, naturalists have remarked, is deeper and more affecting than that of the male: but Jeremiah, in the 34th verse of his 48th chapter, has given us the true exposition. It is not certain what place *Lubith* was; but we may hence collect, clearly enough, that it was some elevated tract or ascent in the extremity of Moab. Bishop Lowth reads it, *yea, to the ascent of Lubith with weeping shall they ascend: and instead of my heart shall cry out, &c.* in the first clause, *The heart of Moab crieth within her.* *Horonaim* was also a city of Moab, situated probably in the descent from Lubith. The prophet in the next verses sets forth the causes of lamentation among the inhabitants of this southern part of Moab. The first is the desolation of their fruitful fields, ver. 6. (See Numb. xxxii. 3—36.) *Nimrim* seems to have been celebrated for its fine fountains and waters. The other cause of grief is set forth in the 7th verse; which should be rendered, *Because the remnant which they had made and laid up, shall they [the Assyrians] carry away to, or beyond, the valley of willows, or the Arabians.* Vitringa thinks that the just rendering is, *The valley of the willows*, and that Babylon is hereby denoted, the banks of the Euphrates abounding with willows. See Psal. cxxxvii. 2. and Bochart. Hieroz. p. 1. lib. viii. c. 7.

*Ver. 8, 9.* For the cry is gone round, &c.] The prophet contemplating, with the most lively imagination, the motion and consternation of all Moab, as if present to his view, scarcely satisfies himself in painting the scene: he repeats again in this place the proposition, and supplies by a general declaration what he might seem not to have expressed with sufficient perfection before: he therefore declares, that this lamentation of which he speaks shall not be private, and peculiar to one place, or to a few, but common to all; and that the tempest should not break upon this or that part of the country only, but should afflict all Moab, every corner and boundary of it; for this cry, this sorrowful howling, is said to go round, to encompass all the borders and extreme boundaries of Moab, and to take in the whole from *Eglaim to Beer-elim*, two cities in the extremities of Moab. He adds in the 9th verse some additional reasons for this lamentation; the first of which is, the great slaughter of the people, which the enemy should make in Moab, expressed in these words, *The waters of Dimon shall be full of blood; for I will bring more upon, or add accessions to, Dimon;* that is to say, the waters of Dimon should be increased by the rivers of the blood of the slain which should flow into them, and so should add accessions, or increase to them. Those waters should increase, and become even a torrent, from the blood of the slain. The expression is strong and elegant. It is uncertain where this river was, which is thought to have had its name from דם *dam, blood*, and there is an elegance in this allusion. See 2 Kings, iii. 19, 22. The other evil, the completion of all the rest, and the severest

cause of their lamentation, is, that God would not even spare a remnant to restore hereafter, and renew this fallen state. *God should send a lion upon them that escaped out of Moab, and upon the remnant of the land:* by which is commonly understood, that God would not spare any of them, but would pursue them with his judgments to the last extremity, and send upon them, and on their desolate country, lions and wild beasts to destroy entirely all that remained. Yet I am persuaded, says Vitringa, that something farther is here intended, and that Nebuchadnezzar is manifestly pointed out, who, after the Moabites, reduced extremely low by the Assyrians, began to recruit themselves, should give the remnant of the nation to destruction, and complete the judgment which the Assyrian had begun. Compare what Jeremiah says of Nebuchadnezzar, ch. iv. 7. and this will appear more probable. Our prophet also himself has used this figure. See ch. v. 26, 27. and compare Jer. v. 6. and xlviii. 40. The Chaldee paraphrast certainly so understood it, translating the word which we read *lion by king: A king with his army to destroy the Moabites.* See Vitringa.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, This prophecy is either the same with that of chap. xvi. 14. and was to be quickly accomplished, within three years, when Salmanezer ravaged the country; or distinct from that, and relative to the final destruction of Moab by Nebuchadnezzar, Jer. xlviii. or, as observed in my critical annotations, inclusive of both.

We have here a picture of the most affecting distress.

1. Sudden and terrible would be the stroke: some of their cities surprised in the night, sacked, and demolished; others, in terror at the expectation of the same fate, with tokens of the bitterest anguish upon them, disfigured with baldness, and girt with sackcloth, and every place full of weeping and tears, loud as the heifer bellows, and reaching to the distant cities, whither they fly for shelter from the approaching ruin. *Note;* (1.) Death often seizes the sinner in the night with terrible surprise. (2.) When we lie down on our beds, our bed may be quickly made our grave by some unexpected stroke: let us therefore be always ready. (3.) It will be too late for those to cry, when God's wrath overtakes them, who before never cried to avert it.

2. All help should fail them: their mighty warriors should faint under their fears, and their life be a burden to them. Or it will bear to be read, *His soul shall cry out for himself*, each bemoaning his wretched case; nor shall their idols afford them relief. Though they go up to their high places to weep, no answer shall be given them, and weeping they shall descend. *Note;* Creature-confidences, like idol-gods, will utterly fail us in time of trouble.

3. The prophet himself in pity drops a tear over their desolations, though enemies. Such tender and compassionate hearts should ministers possess, and, like their



CHAP. XVI.

*Moab is exhorted to yield obedience to Christ's kingdom. Moab is threatened for her pride. The prophet bewaileth her. The judgment of Moab.*

[Before Christ 712.]

**S**END ye the lamb to the ruler of the land from Sela to the wilderness, unto the mount of the daughter of Zion.

2 For it shall be, *that*, as a wandering bird cast out of the nest, *so* the daughters of Moab shall be at the fords of Arnon.

3 Take counsel, execute judgment; make

thy shadow as the night in the midst of the noon-day; hide the outcasts; bewray not him that wandereth.

4 Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler: for the extortioner is at an end, the spoiler ceaseth, the oppressors are consumed out of the land.

5 And in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hastening righteousness.

divine Lord, weep over those sinners that will not be warned.

2dly, From one corner to the other of the land, the cry of Moab should be heard; and no wonder, when her desolations were so great.

1. The country should be devoured and wasted by drought, or eat up as forage by these invaders; so that not a blade of grass should remain; and their abundance, with so much care collected and laid up, be carried away to the brook of the willows; either by themselves to hide it, or rather by their enemies to Babylon, so called from its marshy situation. *Note*; This world's riches are often a short-lived possession, so soon do they make themselves wings and fly away.

2. The waters of Dimon shall be full of blood; the numbers of the slain so great, that her streams should be died thereby: and *more, or additions*, of trouble be brought upon them; the lions shall glean those who escape from the sword. *Note*; When God in just vengeance begins with sinners, he will make an end; and while they continue hardened, he will not be weary in smiting them.

CHAP. XVI.

*Ver. 1, 2. Send ye the lamb*] After Isaiah, in the former part of this prophecy, had described the calamity and the lamentation of the Moabites, he here stands still, as on a sudden; then addresses the Moabites, and informs them as well of the causes of this judgment, as of the means which, if properly applied, might at least mitigate, if not wholly avert it. The prophet does not set forth these causes directly, but obliquely, by the way of prudent counsel; wherein they are admonished of their duty towards the king and people of the Jews, which they had shamefully and proudly neglected; but, foreseeing that the Moabites would not hearken to this counsel, he goes on to describe more fully their calamity. This part of the prophecy therefore is three-fold; *first*, we have the counsel given to the Moabites by the prophet, or the Jewish church, *ver. 1—5*. wherein a two-fold duty is recommended; the one to obtain the friendship of the Jews, which in their calamity would be of great use to them, by paying them their tribute, *ver. 1. 2.* the other to treat with clemency and kindness the Jewish outcasts and exiles among them, for the sake of the great benefit which would redound to them from the Jews in its proper time.

*Secondly*, the success or event of this counsel, that is to say, the contempt of it, whereof the pride and arrogance of the Moabites are shewn to be the cause. *Thirdly*, a repeated description of the calamity to be inflicted upon them for this and the preceding reasons, *ver. 7—12*. The meaning of the first and second verses is this: "Ye Moabites, who, subdued by David, and by him made tributary to his house and kingdom, have with pride and arrogance shaken off his yoke; placate in time, and render propitious to you the Jews and their king, by sending those lambs which you owe to them as a tribute, (2 Kings, iii. 4. 2 Sam. viii. 2.) Send them from Sela, or Petra, [which was most celebrated for its flocks; 2 Kings, xiv. 7.] towards the desert, the desert near Jericho, a medium place between Sela and mount Sion." Josh. v. 10. Some think that the passage might be rendered, from Sela, or Petra in the wilderness; but Vitringa strongly defends the former interpretation. He goes on: "Pay this tribute; for it shall most certainly come to pass, that the daughters of the Moabites, like a wandering bird, and a deserted nest, driven from their seats, must somewhere seek a place of safety in the great calamity which shall befall their nation: it is therefore now time to solicit the friendship of the Jews, and to remember the duty owing to them, but so long neglected; that, when expelled from your own habitations, you may be received kindly by them, and dwell hospitably in their land, and under the shadow of their kings." It is almost the same advice which is given upon another occasion, only in an infinitely more sublime sense, by our Lord. See Luke, xvi. 9. The verses might be read thus: *Send ye the lamb of the ruler of the land* [the tribute of the king of Moab] *from Petra towards the desert, to the mountain of the daughter of Zion; ver. 2. Because it shall come to pass, that as a wandering bird and a forsaken nest, shall the daughters of Moab be, &c.* See Vitringa.

*Ver. 3—5. Take counsel, &c.*] We have here the second counsel given to the Moabites; wherein, *first*, is the counsel itself; *ver. 3, 4.* and the reason of the counsel;—middle of the fourth and the fifth verse. The counsel contains a complex of various offices, equity, justice, humanity, to be exercised towards those of the Israelites, whom the Assyrian affliction had driven, or should drive, to their borders and cities, and who should seek refuge among them; which counsel is so given to the Moabites

6 ¶ We have heard of the pride of Moab; *he is very proud; even of his haughtiness, and his pride, and his wrath; but his lies shall not be so.*

7 Therefore shall Moab howl for Moab, every one shall howl: for the foundations of Kir-hareseth shall ye mourn; surely *they are stricken,*

8 For the fields of Heshbon languish, *and the vine of Sibmah: the lords of the heathen have broken down the principal plants thereof,*

they are come *even* unto Jazer, they wandered *through* the wilderness: her branches are stretched out, they are gone over the sea.

9 Therefore I will bewail with the weeping of Jazer the vine of Sibmah: I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon, and Elealeh: for the shouting for thy summer-fruits, and for thy harvest, is fallen.

10 And gladness is taken away, and joy out of the plentiful field; and in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither shall there

by the prophet, as evidently to upbraid them for the fault of having neglected these offices; the pernicious consequences of which they were sure to feel in the ensuing calamity, if they altered not so bad a practice. *Execute judgment* is literally, *Make a distinction*; and it properly denotes that act of the mind, whereby it discriminates truth from falsehood, right from wrong. It is therefore as much as to say, "Consider not only what becomes you, but what you ought to do in this case; consider what is due to exiles and out-casts, both by the laws of equity and reason, of humanity and brotherly love." The meaning of the next clause, *make thy shadow, &c.* is; "afford the exiled and afflicted Israelites, who shall fly to you for safety, a safe retreat, defence, and succour against the extreme, the noon-day heat of the sharp persecution which so heavily oppresses them." The idea is taken from the comfort of a shady situation in those hot countries; and the metaphor is fully explained in what follows. See chap. iv. 6. Psal. cxxi. 6. Rev. vii. 16. There is great emphasis in the word *Moab*, ver. 4. whereby the Moabites are reminded of the relationship betwixt them and the Jews, as if the prophet had said, "If neither a regard to utility, humanity, and common equity, can persuade you to perform the offices I have recommended to the exiled Israelites, recollect your common kindred and relationship. They are from Abraham, you from Lot; sprung from one common parent, Terah, the father of the one, the grandfather of the other." Vitringa is of opinion that the prophet here refers to the distress of the Reubenites, Gadites, and Manassites under Tiglath-pilezer. See 2 Kings, xv. 29. and 2 Chron. xxviii. 17. The prophet supports his counsel by a reason; the sum of which is, that oppression should cease, the spoilers of the earth be cut off, and the throne of clemency and grace be established, on which a king of righteousness and equity should sit. Primarily, the passage may be referred to Hezekiah, a pious and just king, whose throne, after the chastisement of Sennacherib in Judæa, was established in glory; but chiefly it refers to the Messiah; to Hezekiah as the type, and to Christ in a mystical and more sublime sense. This is the opinion of Vitringa, who thinks that while the prophet was speaking of the advantages of the kingdom of Hezekiah, he was carried forward to a contemplation of the kingdom of Jesus Christ; and, describing the typical kingdom, made use of such phrases as can only be applied to the kingdom of Jesus Christ, in their full

extent. See chap. xxxii. 1. and Vitringa, who reads the first clause of the fifth verse in the present tense; *and the throne is established in grace.*

Ver. 6. *We have heard of the pride of Moab*] These words exhibit the effect or success of the counsel. The prophet shews that the Moabites would not receive, but despise it; the cause whereof he shews to be, the arrogance and pride of the nation; and the immediate cause of that pride, he tells us, are the *diviners* and vain speakers who excited the Moabites against the Jews, and promised them prosperity of a long continuance; whose vain speeches are called by the prophet, *the not-right, the vanity of the diviners*, and so the last clause should be rendered; *the futility or iniquity of his diviners.* See Vitringa.

Ver. 7, 8. *Therefore shall Moab howl*] The prophet, foreseeing that the Moabites would proudly reject the counsel he gave them, takes occasion thence to repeat and continue his tragical prophecy concerning the calamity which should happen to them by the divine determination. This prophecy is of the same argument with that preceding, and reaches to the 13th verse. It may be divided into three sentences; the first contained in the 7th and 8th verses; the second in the 9th and 10th; the third in the 11th and 12th. *Kir-hareseth*, or the city of the sun, seems without doubt to be the same with that mentioned in the first verse of the 15th chapter. Instead of *foundations*, Vitringa reads *flaggons*. Moab was famous for its *vines*, and for its *stocks*, and therefore the prophet takes his ideas principally from these.

Ver. 8. *For the fields, &c.*] *For the fields of Heshbon are put to shame; the vine of Sibmah languisheth, whose generous shoots overpowered the mighty lords of the nations: they reached unto Jazer; they strayed to the desert; her branches extended themselves, they passed over the sea.* The literal meaning of the verse is, "This vine of Sibmah, famous for its fruits, had extended its branches so widely, that they had reached to the lake Jazer, nay, and had even crossed over that lake; i. e. filling its banks they had over-shadowed part of it, as if they were about to cross over it."

Ver. 9. *For the shouting, &c.*] *For, upon thy summer-fruits, and upon thy vintage, the destroyer hath fallen.* Lowth. The meaning of the phrase, *I will bewail with the weeping of Jazer*, or, *I will lament with the lamentation of Jazer, the vine of Sibmah*, is, "I mingle my tears with the tears of the citizens of Jazer and Sibmah, for the devastation which shall happen to their fields and vineyards."

Ver.

be shouting: the treaders shall tread out no wine in *their* presses; I have made *their vintage* shouting to cease.

11 Wherefore my bowels shall sound like an harp for Moab, and mine inward parts for Kir-haresh.

12 And it shall come to pass, when it is seen that Moab is weary on the high place, that he shall come to his sanctuary to pray;

but he shall not prevail.

13 This is the word that the LORD hath spoken concerning Moab since that time.

14 But now the LORD hath spoken, saying, Within three years, as the years of an hireling, and the glory of Moab shall be contemned, with all that great multitude; and the remnant shall be very small and feeble.

*Ver. 12. On the high place*] The meaning of the verse is, that the Moabites, as their last efforts, should go to their altars, there to perform their sacred rites, to appease the anger of their deity; but, wearied herewith, they should enter into the sanctuary, into some more sacred and celebrated sanctuary of their god *Chemosh*, to pour forth their earnest supplications and prayers; but should obtain nothing. This therefore is the last calamity of the Moabites, that struggling with so great evils they should fly to the help of their gods, whom they worshipped with the greatest superstition, and in their extremity should seek help from them; should weary themselves at their altars, should supplicate in their temples, should prostrate themselves before their shrines, but obtain nothing; thus proving the vanity of their superstition, and the imbecility of those false deities on whom they trusted. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 13, 14. This is the word—since that time, &c.] This is the word which Jehovah spake concerning Moab long ago.* Lowth. The prophet had described the future calamity of Moab; but, as the completion of the prophecies was often at a great distance, it happened that men neglected, or at least less regarded, those prophecies which they saw not fulfilled in their own time. That this might not happen in the present case, he adds; that this prophecy should be shortly fulfilled, nay, even *within three years.* In this passage, or epilogue to this remarkable prophecy, the prophet *first* informs us, that what he here denounces is not new, but had been *long since* revealed to him or to other prophets; ver. 13. See Amos ii. 1. *Secondly,* That this prophecy should be fulfilled *within three years;* ver. 14. *Years, as the years of an hireling,* mean “a precise number of years,” determined in the same manner as those of a person who hires himself for any settled time. See chap. xxi. 16. Vitringa is of opinion, that this prophecy was delivered at the same time with that preceding; that is, in the year when Ahaz died, at which time the Israelites as well as the Jews stood much in need of the kindness of the Moabites; so that it had its completion in the third year of king Hezekiah, namely, from the death of his father, which was really the fourth year of his reign, when Salmanezer, coming against the Ephraimites, on a sudden attacked the Moabites, and plundered and destroyed their cities. See 2 Kings, xviii. 9. Mystically, says Vitringa, the *Moabites* may here signify those false Christians, who, once ingrafted into the true church, have yet degenerated into empty superstition; and, instead of friends, become the vilest enemies to the true Israel of God.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, To prevent the threatened ruin,

the prophet warns them what steps to take; to do justice, and shew mercy; and leaves them inexcusable if they reject the admonition.

1. He advises them to send their tribute, laid on them by David, which was paid in lambs and rams, *from Sela*, their capital, *to the wilderness*, the nearest road which led to Zion, *to the ruler of the land*, to Hezekiah, David's rightful successor; or, *O ruler of the land*, the king of Moab, whose duty it was to pay it, and that on the peril of his being ejected from his country; *for it shall be, or, otherwise it shall be;* if this justice be not done, then, as a wandering bird should they be driven from their houses to the borders of their country, and in consternation, uncertain whither to flee.

2. He counsels them to shew mercy to the outcasts of Israel, who, on the invasion of the Assyrians, should fly to hide themselves from their fury. They should protect and cherish them, as a thick shadow, from the scorching heat of persecution; conceal them from their enemies, and never betray them if pursued, but let them dwell in safety in their land till the tyranny was overpast, which should not last long; whether that of Salmanezer, who, after ravaging the country, returned; or that of Sennacherib, whose army was so quickly destroyed. *Note;* (1.) God's people are often persecuted and driven from their homes; but God is with them, and will find them a covert from the storm. (2.) They who are kind to God's outcasts shall find him abundantly recompensing the favour.

3. It would be their interest as well as duty thus to act. As God would establish the throne of Hezekiah, and long continue him in the tabernacle of David, executing righteous judgment, and readily administering justice to the needy, he would be enabled to return the kindness to Moab when her distresses should arrive. *Note;* We should study to oblige every man, as we know not what need we may have of his assistance before we die.

2dly, Because Moab haughtily rejected the prophetic counsel, his doom is near.

1. His sins were great and notorious; with haughtiness and pride he treated the poor refugees of Israel, and in wrath persecuted rather than protected them. *But his lies, or his strength, shall not be so.* He hath mischievous designs against Israel; but God will disappoint his wiles, or break his power, so that his wicked purposes shall not be brought to pass. *Note;* (1.) Pride in God's sight is most abominable. (2.) It is a mercy for God's people, that the power of their enemies is not proportioned to their malice.

2. The sorrows of Moab would be increased; their strangest

## C H A P. XVII.

*Syria and Israel are threatened. A remnant will forsake idolatry. The rest shall be plagued for their impiety. The woe of Israel's enemies.*

[Before Christ 741.]

**T**HE burden of Damascus. Behold, Damascus is taken away from *being* a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap.

strongest fortresses levelled with the ground, and their fertile land wasted. The vine of Sibmah, which spreads her tendrils even unto Jazer, a city in Gilead, and to the Dead Sea, the borders of their country, now languishes, broken down by the lords of the heathen, the Assyrian army; and Heshbon's fruitful fields, no longer cheered with the songs of reapers, or the shouts of those who trod the wine-press, in mournful solitude and silence lie desolate and barren. The prophet, while he denounces the judgment, weeps for their ruin, and, like the trembling strings of the harp, his bowels yearn in compassion over them. *Note*; (1.) Sorrow and sin are twin-sisters. (2.) The miseries even of the wicked move a gracious heart to pity them.

3. All applications to their idol gods would be in vain: though they went from one high place to another, as Balak of old, till they wearied themselves with sacrifices, their miseries would not abate; and as fruitless would be their prayers before the shrine of Chemosh. The decree was gone forth, *since that time*, the date of the prophecy in the first year of Hezekiah, and was now irreversible. *Note*; (1.) When prayer is the extorted cry of suffering, and not the voice of repentant sorrow, no marvel it is rejected. (2.) There is a time when prayer comes too late to profit: it will be in vain to knock when the door is shut.

4. The day of execution is fixed for Moab's destruction, when their glory shall be despicable, their multitude of soldiers cut off, and the remnant weak and disabled to make head against their invaders. In three years, as the years of a hireling, who waits with earnestness the expiration of his contract, the people of God might expect the fulfilment of the prophecy. *But now the Lord hath spoken* concerning a near event, which was a warning to them, and a prelude to their final ruin.

## C H A P. XVII.

*Ver. 1. The burden of Damascus*] The fourth discourse of the second book of these prophecies is contained in this and the following chapter. The Syrians of Damascus, who bordered upon the Ephraimites, had long lived in a state of hostility with them; but their king *Rezin*, on receiving some injuries from Uzziah, king of Judah, had united them with himself in an expedition against Jerusalem, which was wholly frustrated. See chap. vii. This disappointment hastened the destruction of these nations; for the Assyrians called in by Ahaz to his help, and who had a long time threatened Syria, by the will of God took this occasion to seize upon and destroy Damascus, and trans-

2 The cities of Aroer *are* forsaken: they shall be for flocks, which shall lie down, and none shall make *them* afraid.

3 The fortrefs also shall cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Syria: they shall be as the glory of the children of Israel, saith the LORD of hosts.

port the Damascene Syrians to Assyria and Media, as the Ephraimites afterwards were under Tiglath pileser and Salmanezer; for a common cause involved these nations in a common calamity: which calamity makes the argument of this prediction. The prophet shews, that in a short time Damascus should be besieged, destroyed, and the kingdom abolished which had flourished for many ages, and also that the state of the Ephraimites should at the same time meet with a notable overthrow, and should soon after be wholly subverted: after which he turns his discourse to the Assyrian, who, after having destroyed these kingdoms, the enemies of the people of God, should attempt the subversion of the kingdom of Judah also. But in vain: for he foretels his destruction by the hand of God, without any human aid. This discourse may be divided into four parts. The *first* sets forth the sentence of the divine judgment upon Damascus and the Damascene kingdom: ver. 1—3. The *second* upon the Ephraimites, with some alleviations: ver. 4—11. The *third* upon the Assyrians, ver. 14. The *fourth* contains an addition to the preceding period, wherein the Assyrian slaughter is declared and illustrated, and commanded to be told to the Egyptians and Ethiopians, and to be made known to all nations of the earth; chap. xvi. 1—7. It is most likely that this prophecy was delivered at the same time with the fifth discourse; chap. vii—xii. Concerning Damascus, see Univ. Hist. vol. ii. p. 260. and Maundrell's Journey from Aleppo, p. 121.

*Ver. 1—3. Behold, Damascus is taken away*] We have here the sentence of the divine judgment upon Damascus; wherein are four penal judgments to be inflicted upon that state. The *first* is the overthrow of Damascus: *Behold, Damascus is taken*, &c. See chap. xxv. 2. The *second* is the destruction of the cities of the Damascene valley; ver. 2. By the *cities of Aroer*, we understand that celebrated valley which lay between the mountains of Libanus and Anti-Libanus, and possibly among these was Palmyra of the desert. The *third* judgment is expressed ver. 3. *The fortrefs also shall cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Syria.* The meaning most probably is, that, Damascus being destroyed, that *fortrefs* or protection in which the Ephraimites had placed their confidence should be taken; or it may be, that at what time Damascus shall be overthrown, and deprived of all government and power, the Ephraimites also should be weakened and deprived of their chief fortresses by the Assyrians; which latter seems to be the best sense. See Hof. x. 14. and Mic. i. 6. The *fourth* judgment is the carrying away of the Damascenes into banishment. *They shall be as the glory of the children of Israel*, means, "The

4 And in that day it shall come to pass, *that* the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean.

5 And it shall be as when the harvest-man gathereth the corn, and reapeth the ears with his arm; and it shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of Rephaim.

6 ¶ Yet gleanings shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive-tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof, saith the LORD God of Israel.

7 At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel.

8 And he shall not look to the altars, the

work of his hands, neither shall respect *that* which his fingers have made, either the groves, or the images.

9 ¶ In that day shall his strong cities be as a forsaken bough, and an uppermost branch, which they left because of the children of Israel: and there shall be desolation.

10 Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength, therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants, and shall set it with strange slips:

11 In the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish: *but* the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow.

“The lot of the Damascenes and other Syrians shall be the same as that of the Ephraimites; whose *glory*, i. e. whose most excellent citizens, spoiled of their dignity, should be carried with their riches and property into Assyria and Media; their state overthrown, and their fortified towns destroyed.” The prophet seems to allude to Hof. ix. 11. See chap. x. 3. and viii. 4. It is certain from History, that Tiglath-pileser, in the third or fourth year of Ahaz, executed this sentence against Damascus. *He went up against Damascus and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin.* See 2 Kings, xvi. 9.

Ver. 4—6. *And in that day, &c.*] The Ephraimites and Syrians, guilty of the same fault, were to suffer the same punishment; wherefore, in the former period, wherein the prophet foretold the fate of Damascus, he at the same time mentioned that of the Ephraimites. But here, in describing their punishment more particularly, he proceeds in such a manner, that his prophecy approaches nearly to history. He shews, very clearly, that the judgment which God would inflict upon the Ephraimites should be twofold. In the former, wherein their distresses from Tiglath-pileser is described, he shews that God would throw in some alleviation, ver. 4—8. in the other, that God would consummate his judgment against the impenitent, and would bring upon the land of the Ephraimites entire desolation, ver. 9—11. which is the calamity brought upon them by Salmanezar. The prophet explains the judgment upon Ephraim by two similes, and both elegant; the first taken from a beautiful body, reduced by a consumption; the meaning whereof is, that their state should be deprived not only of its chief citizens, but of all its power, wealth, and honour: whatever it formerly possessed, which gave excellence and beauty, should entirely waste away and be consumed. See chap. x. 16. The second simile is taken from the autumnal gathering-in of fruits, or from that fertile harvest, whether of corn, wine, or oil, which used to be gathered in the valley of Rephaim. Whereas the reapers leave a few ears of corn, or the gatherers of the grapes and olives a few of the worst

bunches of the grapes and of the worst berries of the olives; so from the Assyrian harvest in Ephraim, a few men, and those of the least consequence, should be left as a remnant in the land. Bishop Lowth renders the 6th verse. *A gleanings shall be left in it, as in the shaking of the olive-tree; two or three berries on the top of the uppermost bough, &c.* See Josh. xv. 8. xviii. 16. concerning the valley of Rephaim, or the giants.

Ver. 7, 8. *At that day, &c.*] The meaning of these verses, which express the consequence of this judgment, is, that at the time when God should execute these severe judgments upon the Ephraimites, some, after they have clearly known by experience, that they have been deceived by their false prophets, and that their worship of idols has turned out as the true prophets foretold, shall turn themselves by sincere repentance to the God of their fathers, and, abjuring the errors of former times, shall worship God in true faith. History confirms this interpretation; see 2 Chron. xxx. 11. xxxiv. 9. The phrase of *looking to his Maker*, which is emphatical and strong, is explained by parallel passages, chap. xxxi. 1. Pl. xxxiv. 5. Zech. xii. 10. compared with John, iii. 14, 15. The fountain from which every act of true religion flows, is a *respect* to God; a looking to him in faith, with confidence and love, and the utmost self-humiliation. Vitringa renders the last words, *Either the images, or the solar statues.*

Ver. 9—11. *In that day, &c.*] Ver. 9. *As a forsaken bush and a top-shoot;*—ver. 10. *Therefore didst thou plant—and didst set,* ver. 11. *In the day of thy planting didst thou make increase, and in the morning madest thy seed to flourish: deplorable will be the harvest in the day of trouble, and sorrow incurable.* This period, which is more difficult to be understood than the former, contains in my idea, says Vitringa, a confirmation and amplification of the former judicial sentence, with respect to another degree of judgment, whereby the kingdom of the Ephraimites should be wholly subverted; so that what Tiglath-pileser had left Salmanezar should entirely desolate and destroy, after a few years attacking of the Ephraimites; taking and subverting those cities, which, like berries on the highest and lowest boughs,

12 ¶ Woe to the multitude of many people, *which* make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, *that* make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters!

13 The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but *God* shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chafed

as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind.

14 And behold at evening-tide trouble; and before the morning he *is* not. This *is* the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us.

boughs, had been left to this nation. *In that day*, says the prophet, *shall his strong cities*, left, [the Assyrians under Tiglath] *because of*, or *in respect to*, the children of Israel; (i. e. that they might not wholly depopulate the land, but leave them some remnant of state and power;) those very cities, I say, shall be taken and destroyed, and among them Samaria. See Jerem. ix. 7. The phrase, *it shall be for a desolation*, is to be understood collectively, though some suppose that Samaria is here particularly pointed at. In the two next verses we have the defence of the judgment denounced in the 9th, the first part whereof is plain enough: the Ephraimites had forsaken their God, and had placed their confidence in false deities. The latter part is more obscure. Grammatically understood, the meaning is, "*Therefore*, because thou hast been forgetful of thy God, though thou hast diligently cultivated and planted thy lands with the choicest and best plants of every kind, and hast done every thing to make those plants grow, and to gain increase, yet hast thou profited nothing; for, when the Assyrian army shall come, it shall only be a heap of an harvest, to be consumed in a short time, in the day of thy grief." But Vitringa thinks the passage, thus understood, not sufficiently sublime for our prophet; and therefore he understands it mystically, concerning the extreme desire of the people of Ephraim for the superstitions of foreign nations, which he elegantly calls, *strange*, or *exotic plants*, but which, though obtained and planted by them with the greatest care, should be abolished and destroyed, to their great ignominy and shame, together with the cities and fields in which they were consecrated, and should afford a deplorable harvest in the time of the greatest calamity, even now threatening them from the Assyrian; the truth whereof was proved by the event. See Matt. xv. 13. 2 Chron. xxx. 6. and Vitringa.

*Ver. 12—14. Woe to the multitude*] We have here the third member of this prophetic discourse, and the first part of the section, concerning the unexpected overthrow of the Assyrians. After the prophet had exhibited the divine judgment upon the Syrians and Ephraimites, he immediately beholds the Assyrians themselves, after they had destroyed both these states; that is to say, eight years afterwards, advancing against the Jews, that they might oppress and subject to them *their* state also: but at the same time he sees their grievous and sudden fall; that is, the fall of Sennacherib; for almost all ancient and modern interpreters are agreed, that this prophecy refers to him. It contains an antecedent and consequent, with a conclusion. The *antecedent* is the vehement motion of the Assyrian army towards Judæa, elegantly compared to a mighty sea stirred up by the winds, whose waves dashed against each other with great roaring; ver. 12. to the middle of

the 13th. The *consequence* is, the extraordinary, sudden, and grievous punishment with which this proud king was to be depressed and overthrown; middle of ver. 13. to middle of ver. 14. To which is subjoined a *conclusion* concerning the enemies of the church. Bishop Lowth observes, respecting the simile in the 12th verse, that though it is taken from a common appearance, it is wrought up with such an elegant boldness and inexpressible propriety, that we are at a loss whether we should admire most the judgment or sublimity of the sacred writer. See chap. viii. 7. 2 Chron. xxxii. 7. Psal. lxxv. 8. The words describing the consequence of this judgment, may be rendered, *And God rebukes him* [Sennacherib, who is here immediately pointed out, one hundred and eighty-five thousand of his army being smitten with death] *and he shall fly far away*. The prophet's idea is here taken from God's rebuke of the sea when the Israelites passed through out of Egypt. Instead of *a rolling thing before the wind*, we may render, *as the straw or chaff turned round in a whirlwind: like the chaff of the hills before the wind*, says Bishop Lowth. This comparison is frequently made use of to illustrate the ease with which *Jehovah* overcomes his enemies, and will receive great light from a recollection of what we have heretofore said concerning the threshing-floors of the Jews. See Prov. xxviii. 1. The fourteenth verse more fully sets forth the destruction of the Assyrian; *At evening-tide, and behold, trouble; before the morning he is not*. Every one must discern that the prophet here alludes to the time and circumstances of the judgment which was inflicted upon the Assyrians by *night*, and indeed in one night. At evening-tide the Jews were certainly in great terror, perplexity, horror, and perturbation, when besieged by the Assyrians; in the morning *behold they were all dead corpses!* a striking emblem of the *fashion of this world*, and of the affliction of good men, and the church, which soon passeth away. For the consolation of these the prophet subjoins an instruction: *This is the portion, &c.* This holds good in all ages of the church; none can endeavour to remove this stone from its place, but they will find hurt to themselves: Zech. xii. 3. In this one example we see the fall of all the empires and kingdoms of the world which oppose the kingdom of Christ, and the event of all the attempts of Satan tending to its destruction; in the evening confusion; in the morning serenity arising by divine grace on the church. See Vitringa.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The cup of trembling goes round; Syria and Israel must drink of it. They were closely allied; but the strongest confederacies in sin will fail. The burden begins with Syria; Damascus, the capital, is doomed to fall, and lie for a while in ruins; her fertile villages

CHAP. XVIII.

*God, in care of his people, will destroy the Ethiopians. An access thereby shall grow unto the church.*

[Before Christ 741.]

**W**OE to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia:

2 That sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters, saying, Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled, to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled!

villages desolate; the deserted houses become shepherds' huts; and in the streets, once thronged with crowds of citizens, the sheep shall graze unmolested. The few who remain poor and despicable, shall be as the glory of Israel, an ironical expression, since Israel's glory too was alike departed. The fortrefs of Ephraim, Samaria, shall be demolished, the government dissolved; so that it should no more recover: and all the fatness of Israel, her riches and multitudes, once her glory, like a man wasted with a consumption, shall pine away, destroyed by famine or the sword; ripe for ruin as the corn in harvest, and cut down by the armies of the Assyrians, as the reaper gathers the sheaf, and with as much care as the husbandman in the vale of Rephaim, where the corn was peculiarly excellent, collected every ear. *Note;* (1.) If pining consumption seize the body natural or politic, we may quickly trace the origin of the disease to sin, the cause of every human misery. (2.) The strongest fortrefs has no defence, when God stretches out his arm to destroy. (3.) When the sinner is ripe for destruction, death, as the harvest-man, will put in the sickle, and none can deliver out of his hands.

2dly, One gleam of mercy beams through the darkness, to comfort the hearts of God's faithful people amid these desolating judgments. They shall be preserved from the destruction; and hid in the day of the Lord's fierce anger, by escaping to Judah, or being overlooked by the Assyrians.

1. They are but few, very few, like the gleanings when the vintage is over, or two or three olives left on the topmost bough, which were not shaken down. *Note;* Such as are careful in the evil day to keep close to God, he will keep from the hour of temptation.

2. They are drawn nearer to God by their danger. *At that day of Israel's calamity shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the holy One of Israel.* In prayer the faithful will spread their case before God their Saviour, and cast their care on him, renouncing every vain confidence, such as the idol altars and images of their apostate countrymen, which themselves might have formerly worshipped, but now abhorred and rejected; they cleave to the Lord alone, as able to save them in the day of evil. *Note;* (1.) They are blessed afflictions which bring us nearer to God. (2.) As naturally as a child runs to its parent for protection, so does the child of God in the day of distress in prayer betake himself to the arms of Jesus his Saviour. (3.) Nothing serves more to detach the soul from earth and creature-comforts and confidences, than those strokes of Providence which convince us of their vanity.

3dly, The prophet, having said to the righteous, It shall be well with them, returns to cry Woe to the wicked, for it shall be ill with them.

Vol. III.

1. The cause of all their misery is their departure from God. They had forgotten his wonders of mercy and grace, neglected his worship, disregarded his commands, and, forsaking the rock of their strength, were justly forsaken by him. *Note;* (1.) Negligence about the things of God, and their souls, is the great sin and ruin of mankind. (2.) They who forsake the God of their strength renounce their own mercies.

2. The consequence of their apostacy is their destruction. As desolate as the cities of Canaan were made when first Israel seized them, so desolate should their own cities become through the sword of the Assyrians, as a withered branch stripped of its leaves, and a topmost bough blasted and dead. Their country, cultivated with such assiduity, full of pleasant fruits, its native produce, and improved by foreign trees and plants, promised a great increase: but, ere the day of harvest comes, all is blasted, a heap in the day of grief or possession; when they expected to reap, the enemy should collect their fruits into a heap, destroying what he did not use, and leaving them nothing but desperate sorrow; not only their land wasted, but themselves carried captive, without any hope of ever returning to it again. *Note;* (1.) If the wicked Canaanites were cast out of their cities, let not the wicked Israelites think to escape. (2.) When worldly hopes and cares engross our hearts, God justly blasts our prospects, and punishes our creature-idolatry.

4thly, We have a prophecy concerning the destruction of Sennacherib and his army.

1. Their multitude and impetuosity are described, like raging seas rolling their furious billows to the shore, and foaming out, in Rabshakeh's blasphemy, their own shame.

2. Their woe is denounced. God will take the cause into his own hand, and rebuke the wrath of these fierce enemies. They shall rush upon their ruin; his angel, like chaff, shall beat them small; and, as the down of thistles before the whirlwind, so easily shall they be dispersed, and the few that remain from the sword of the destroyer flee far away. *Note;* The mightiest foes of the church and people of God, before the Almighty, are less than nothing and vanity.

3. A quick period is put to the distress of God's people. Though troubled in the evening, when they beheld the approaching hosts of Assyria, one night removed their fears, and the next morning shewed them the dead corpses of their enemies. *Note;* Though the faithful may be now and then dismayed, their heaviness endureth but for a night, and joy cometh in the morning.

4. Such shall be the case of all the enemies of God's church; and his servants must remember it for their comfort; for this is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them

4 B

them

3 All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye.

*them that rob us. Note;* The past experience of God's people should be treasured up as a ground of present confidence in the like temptations.

C H A P. XVIII.

*Ver. 1. Woe to the land]* The fourth member of this prophesy is contained in the present chapter; which, being another part of the second section, connects with the preceding most closely, as containing an enarration of the former member; that is, of the Assyrian punishment, figuratively set forth in the manner of our prophet; for he commands ambassadors to be sent to the Egyptians, who not only revered but feared the Assyrian power; as also to other nations, to inform them concerning this great work of the divine justice to be effected in the most proper season, and to invite them to this tremendous spectacle. This is Vitringa's idea of the present prophesy, which is extremely obscure, and has been very differently interpreted. The scene of it, says he, is fixed in Judæa, at that time which immediately preceded the Assyrian overthrow, when the mountains nearest to Jerusalem were occupied by the *Assyrian forces*, whose standards were erected upon them, and they now threatened destruction to the city. The prophet sees the tents removed, the hurry of the forces, the standards moving on the mountains, and all things prepared to execute the destructive purposes of the Assyrian. But God had fixed upon this time as most proper to execute the judgment decreed on the haughty enemy. He commands the Egyptians therefore first, (ver. 1, 2.) who feared from the Assyrians, for themselves, the same things which the Jews feared, and then all the other nations of the earth, to be informed by *swift messengers*, that they should diligently attend to this period of time, and expect this specimen of the divine judgment. The parts of the prophesy therefore are, *first*, A declaration of the divine judgment decreed for the Assyrians, to be made to the Egyptians and other nations: ver. 1—3. *Secondly*, A description of that judgment to be inflicted upon these enemies of the people of God in the most proper season: ver. 4—6. *Thirdly*, The consequence of this judgment: ver. 7. The first part contains, I. An address to Egypt, whereby that nation is excited to attention, and prepared to receive some messenger of great importance; which address is composed with so great art, that the Egyptian superstition is at the same time ridiculed in it; ver. 1. to the middle of ver. 2. II. A figurative proposition, concerning that messenger to the Egyptians now attentive and ready to receive him;—latter part of the second verse. III. A similar declaration to the other nations of the earth, ver. 3. Egypt is addressed here, and spoken of under three of its attributes: in the *first* place, it is said to be *shadowing* or *shadowed with wings*, because it is situated between two mountains on its eastern and western side, which as it were overshadow it; and as Egypt is most narrow towards Ethiopia, these two mountains overshadowing it from the east of the Nile towards Arabia, and from the west towards Lybia, unfold themselves more and more, in the

manner of two wings, from the south towards the north, or, from Syene towards Arabia; as if the prophet had said, "*Hearken, O land, which art defended on either side*" by *great mountains overshadowing thee*, and expanding "*themselves gradually more and more, after the manner*" of *wings*, from the south towards the north." The word קנף *kanap*, rendered *wings*, signifies the extremity or border of any thing, and is so used by our prophet, chap. xi. 12. xxiv. 16. in the original. This interpretation is exactly agreeable to history. See Strabo, lib. xvii. p. 543. Herod. lib. ii. p. 103. The *second* attribute is, that it is *beyond the rivers of Ethiopia*; whereby Vitringa understands the Nile, and the rivers *Ajlabor* and *Astapus*, which flow into it from Ethiopia: great and celebrated rivers, which very much increase the waters of the Nile. The prophet the rather denominates Egypt from this epithet, because at this time it was under the power of the Ethiopians. The *third* character is in the second verse, *that sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters*; which words contain a criterion of the people of the land of Egypt; as if the prophet had said, "*As you, Egyptians, are accustomed, in little barks and vessels*" made of papyrus, which are extremely quick in their "*motion, to send ambassadors or letters, which bear your*" commands to your confederates; prepare your vessels, "*which may bear my commands, &c.*" Vitringa is of opinion, that something farther is referred to in these expressions; namely, a superstitious custom among the Egyptians, who used to send a vessel of papyrus to Byblos, with a letter concerning the death of Adonis, which was lamented by the people of Byblos; a superstition which is mentioned by Ezekiel, chap. viii. 14. The reader will find this matter explained at large in Vitringa. After the preface, by which Egypt is excited to attention, a third person is here introduced, who supplies the messengers with the command to be borne through all the creeks and parts of the Nile to the Egyptians, to inform them of the judgment to be inflicted on the Assyrian, the enemy of them and of the Ethiopians. We are either to suppose God, or the prophet by his command, speaking here. By the *swift messengers*, we are to understand those vessels above-mentioned, which were the usual and speedy conveyances of their notices and commands; and the inhabitants of Egypt are here described from their true attributes. They are *first* called a *nation scattered*, which should rather be rendered a *nation protracted*, or *stretched out*. The prophet alludes to the land of Egypt, which, from the north to the south, was stretched out or extended in length, and so inhabited on either side of the Nile. Diodorus says its figure is oblong. It is, *secondly*, called *peeled*; *depilata*, *shaven*, which very exactly characterises the Egyptians, who in many cases used to shave off all the hair of their body, as ancient historians in general witness. The *third* character is, *A people formidable from their beginning, and still so*; which also well suits the Egyptians, whose kingdom was one of the most ancient, and continued long to be extremely formidable. The *fourth* criterion is, as we render it,



4 For so the LORD said unto me, I will take my rest, and I will consider in my dwelling-place like a clear heat upon herbs, and like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest.

5 For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off the sprigs with

pruning-hooks, and take away and cut down the branches.

6 They shall be left together unto the fowls of the mountains, and to the beasts of the earth: and the fowls shall summer upon them, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them.

7 ¶ In that time shall the present be brought

it, a nation meted out; but literally, קו קו 'גוי *goi kav kav*, a nation of precept and precept; that is, a superstitious nation, and abounding with innumerable rites and religious ceremonies; (see chap. xxviii. 9, 10.) which also is well known to have been the case with Egypt. The fifth and sixth criterions are, *A nation trodden down, and whose land the rivers have spoiled*; literally, *A nation of conculcation, or of treading down*; that is to say, according to some, "a terrible nation, which hath frequently trodden down others." But the word may certainly be understood in the passive sense; which seems the more proper, from the clause that follows it, and which should be rendered, *whose land the rivers* (that is, of the Nile) *carry away, or spoil*; which is the case when the Nile in its annual overflowings rises above its common height. The prophet, therefore, here alludes to an usual custom among the Egyptians, who, when the Nile had returned to its channel, used to sow their land, and with their cattle tread in their seeds. See Diodor. lib. i. p. 23. Herodotus, lib. ii. p. 106. and Vitringa.

Ver. 3. *All ye inhabitants*] We have here the declaration made to the other people of the world to expect the fall of the Assyrian. God invites all the people of the earth to this sight; that as soon as they should observe the sign appointed by God, namely, *the standards lifted up on the mountains of Judæa, and the sound of the trumpets of the hostile army preparing to besiege Jerusalem*, they should attend to the execution of this divine judgment. *When he lifteth up*, seems undoubtedly to mean the commander of this great army, or Sennacherib. Vitringa.

Ver. 4—6. *For so the Lord said, &c.*] We have here the divine judgment to be inflicted upon the Assyrian in its due time. The passage is obscure and difficult. The first part of it sets forth, figuratively, Jehovah as it were expecting and in his counsel considering the proper time for the execution of this judgment, while he had determined in himself to refresh the pious among his people with some proofs of his favour. The second part describes the judgment itself. The former part is contained in these words, *For so the Lord said unto me*; that is to say, revealed this thing unto me from his secret purposes; *I will take my rest, and I will consider in my dwelling-place*; that is to say, "While the Assyrian is forming his designs for the destruction of my people, I will seem to rest, and to have a regard for their preservation; and I will behold and consider in the heavens, what time most conveniently to execute my purpose upon the Assyrians." Every reader must observe that this is spoken *humano more* (after the manner of men). But while God was in this state, with what disposition towards his people would he

rest? The prophet clearly informs us in the next words; *Like a clear or severe heat upon herbs, or after rain; like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest.* See 2 Sam. xxiii. 4. The meaning of these metaphorical expressions is, that God would not so rest, as to lay aside all care and regard for his people; but that he rested with the best and most benevolent purpose of comforting his people after this affliction, and of refreshing them with his blessings: that he only considered at what time to do it most effectually; both that he might destroy the enemies of his people, and might give them such a refreshment, as that of a severe heat after a heavy rain, and as a cloud of dew in the time of harvest: the Chaldee paraphrast understands the passage in this sense. The latter part of this period informs us how he would behave towards those adversaries for whom he had destined this great slaughter. The prophet in the fifth verse compares the adversaries of the people of God to a vine, which after it has sent forth its bud, then its flower, and the flower the sour grape, which too was beginning to ripen,—then comes the hand which suddenly cuts off all hope of the vintage, destroying as well the sprigs as the greater branches of the vine with pruning hooks, and leaves those branches burdened with grapes a prey to the birds of heaven and the beasts of the earth; the whole vine being thus miserably cut down and spoiled: ver. 6: by which the prophet means, that when every thing respecting the Assyrians was in the most promising situation, a sudden destruction should come upon them, and destroy all their flattering hopes of a successful harvest. See Job xv. 33. and Vitringa.

Ver. 7. *In that time*] The words of this verse are sufficiently plain, exhibiting a notable consequence of the divine judgment, whereby the Egyptians as well as the Ethiopians should receive great benefit: for it should come to pass that they, or some of them, awakened by this tremendous judgment, should come to the knowledge of the God of Israel, and should profess their faith, and unite themselves to the church establishment in mount Zion. chap. xix. 18, 19, &c. Psal. lxxviii. 31. lxxxvii. 3. *In that time, or after that time*, signifies soon after the execution of this signal judgment; and that this was the case we learn very remarkably from sacred history, 2 Chron. xxxii. 23. These offerings then, made from Egypt and all nations, were a prelude of the more perfect conversion of the Gentiles to the God of Israel; (see particularly Josephus against Apion, lib. 2. and Vitringa;) and there is nothing more certain than that God, after the remarkable overthrow of Sennacherib, was like the clear heat after rain, like dew in the time of harvest, to the people of Israel. See the chapter of Chronicles above referred to.

unto the LORD of Hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the LORD of Hosts, the mount Zion.

## REFLECTIONS.—

1. A woe is pronounced on Egypt—the land which sendeth ambassadors to form alliances, and to engage auxiliary forces, in order to strengthen its army.

2. God prepares to disappoint their designs, and gives his orders: *Go, ye swift messengers of his vengeance, to a nation scattered and peeled*; which, with the following words, some suppose addressed to Judæa, harassed by the Assyrians; but are rather spoken of these invaders.

3. All the people of the earth are called to be spectators of the controversy, when on the mountains of Judæa the proud Assyrian monarch should lift up his banners, and found the dread alarm. However intimidating his appearance, God bids them see and hear, and mark the end. *Note*; God's hand of providential interposition is carefully to be remarked; and, when dangers are most alarming, he is nearest to defend and save us. As it is written, *in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen*.

4. For a while God seems to give up his people for a prey. *So the Lord said unto me, I will take my rest*, as one asleep, and disregarding the distress of his people; and *I will consider in my dwelling-place what I resolve to do*; or, *I will look upon my dwelling-place*, Jerusalem, so called from the Shechinah of glory abiding in the temple, *like a clear heat upon herbs, and like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest*; either reviving them, as the sun quickens the grass after a shower, and a cloud allays the scorching heat of harvest; or, suffering them for a while to be afflicted, as the sun burns up the grass, and as rain is hurtful in the time of harvest. And this may refer to his dealings with his people, whom he would comfort and protect; or the invading Assyrians, whose devices he would thus consider and disappoint. *Note*; (1.) God's repose can never be disturbed by all the impotent rage of his foes. (2.) He seems, respecting his people, sometimes to have forgotten and forsaken them, when he is just ready to display his designs of grace for their deliverance.

5. His enemies, when ready in their own conceits, to reap the fruits of their conquests, are destroyed. *Afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect*, their designs formed for execution, and *the fur grape*, the mischievous purpose, *is ripening in the flower*, ready to be accomplished, *he shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning-hooks, and take away and cut down the branches*; destroy both the soldiers of the army and the chief captains by the sword of the angel; and such a slaughter shall be made, that food enough will be provided from the carcases of the slain, during summer and winter, for the fowls and the wild beasts. *Note*; The deepest-laid schemes against God's people, in which their adversaries already triumph in the certainty of success, God can easily counteract, to the confusion of all the enemies of his cause.

## C H A P. XIX.

*The confusion of Egypt. The foolishness of their princes. The calling of Egypt to the church. The covenant of Egypt, Assyria, and Israel.*

[Before Christ 714.]

**T**HE burden of Egypt. Behold, the LORD rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come

6. God's people, delivered by his wondrous interposition, would bring to his altar a grateful present from the spoil of their enemies. Or this may refer to future times, when the posterity of these as well as of other ancient enemies of God's church, should present themselves to him; and, wretched and vile as before their character was esteemed, being converted by grace, their offering would be accepted, and they admitted into the church of Christ, *the place of the name of the Lord of Hosts, the spiritual mount Zion*. *Note*; (1.) If God enriches us by his providence, we are bound to bring the grateful present to him, and the poor are his receivers. (2.) They who design the ruin of others, are themselves justly given up for a prey.

## C H A P. XIX.

*Ver. 1. The burden of Egypt*] The fifth discourse of the second book of Isaiah's prophecy contained in this chapter, delivered at another time, and much later than the preceding, copiously sets forth the fate of Egypt, a nation from the remotest antiquity famous in the east. The scene of the prophecy is, according to Isaiah's manner, elegantly laid. He introduces God, borne upon a swift cloud, coming into Egypt to execute the decrees of his justice, to the confusion of the idols of that superstitious country. He then describes the evils and calamities, as well of the approaching as of future time, which should fall upon Egypt; in which the presence of God, as the judge of this people, should be observed. The prophecy is twofold. The FIRST part describes the evil which should happen to Egypt; wherein we have, *first*, a figurative proposition, which sets forth the argument of the prophecy, ver. 1. *Secondly*, the evils about to happen to Egypt are enumerated; ver. 2—4. *Thirdly*, the consequence of these evils, ver. 5—10. *Fourthly*, the immediate cause of these evils, the want of salutary counsel in the princes of Egypt; ver. 11—17. The LATTER part exhibits, *first*, a proposition concerning the grace of God and the knowledge of true religion, to be communicated to the Egyptians; ver. 18. to the middle of 20. *Secondly*, the causes of that benefit:—middle of 20. to 22. *Thirdly*, some notable adjuncts of it, ver. 23—25. Some expositors interpret this prophecy literally, others mystically; but the more judicious are for the literal interpretation; and Vitringa thinks, that the greater part of the prophecy refers to the time of Cambyfes, and the desolation brought upon Egypt by the Persians: But of this we shall speak more at large in the following notes. Concerning the history of Egypt we refer the reader to Vitringa and the Univ. Hist. vol. i. p. 319. and vol. ii. p. 97.

*Behold, the Lord rideth, &c.*] The prophet begins with an elegant proposition, wherein he advises us that God is there present where he judges, or that the judgments of God are most certain testimonies of his presence among men

into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it.

2 And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbour; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom.

3 And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the

midst thereof: and I will destroy the counsel thereof; and they shall seek to the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards.

4 And the Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the LORD, the LORD of Hosts.

5 And the waters shall fail from the sea,

men as their ruler and judge, and that, the time of his long-suffering being completed, he will execute his judgments suddenly, and more swiftly than human expectation. See Malachi, iii. 5. The first effect of God's coming to judgment upon Egypt is said to be, *the commotion of the idols*. The prophet declares, that at the approach of God they should be moved, and fall from their places, like Dagon at the presence of the ark. The second effect is, that *the heart of Egypt should melt in the midst of it*; that is, the Egyptians should be in so great a consternation, that their very souls should faint within them, through dread of their approaching calamities. See Deut. xx. 8. Luke, xxi. 26. Hereby the prophet means to inform us, that the prince who should come upon Egypt, and lay it waste, should approach with the most swift and rapid motion, as the executor of the decrees of the divine justice; that he should throw down and destroy their idols, and fill all Egypt with the greatest consternation. Now it is certain, that Cambyfes, about forty-four years after the delivery of this prophecy, exactly fulfilled these things; particularly with respect to the idols of Egypt. His first attempt, says Bishop Newton, was upon Pelusium, a strong town at the entrance of Egypt, and the key of the kingdom; and he succeeded by the stratagem of placing before his army a great number of dogs, sheep, cats, and other animals, which being held sacred by the Egyptians, not one of them would cast a javelin, or shoot an arrow that way; and so the town was stormed and taken in a manner without resistance. He treated the gods of Egypt with marvellous contempt, laughed at the people, and chastised the priests for worshipping such deities. He slew *Apis*, or the sacred ox, which the Egyptians worshipped, with his own hand, burned and demolished their other idols and temples; and would likewise, if he had not been prevented, have destroyed the famous temple of Jupiter Ammon. Ochus too, who was another king of Persia, and subdued the Egyptians again, after they had revolted, plundered their temples, and caused *Apis* to be slain, and served up in a banquet to him and his friends. See Bishop Newton and Vitranga.

*Ver. 2, 3. And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians*] Two principal misfortunes of Egypt, on which the rest depend, are related in this prophecy; the *first*, a civil war to arise in Egypt, with its consequence; ver. 2, 3. The other, the oppression of Egypt by some potent prince or princes. Instead of *kingdom against kingdom*, the LXX read, *province against province*, νομος εμι νομον, Egypt being divided into *nomoi*, præfectures or provinces. Vitranga and others apply this to the time of the reign of

the twelve kings, the anarchy which preceded, and the civil wars which ensued; wherein Pſammiticus prevailed over the rest: but it may perhaps be more properly applied to what agrees better in point of time with other parts of the prophecy; the civil wars between Apries and Amasis, at the time of Nebuchadnezzar's invasion; and the civil wars between Tachos, Nectanebus, and the Mendesian, a little before the country was finally subdued by Ochus. It is no wonder that, *in consequence* of such distractions and distresses as these, the Egyptians, being naturally a cowardly people, should be destitute of counsel; and that *the spirit of Egypt should fail in the midst thereof*; and that, being also a very superstitious people, they should *seek to their idols*, &c.; a remarkable instance whereof, with respect to Pſammiticus, we are told by Herodotus, lib. ii. p. 169. See Bishop Newton and Vitranga as before.

*Ver. 4. And the Egyptians will I give over, &c.*] The *second calamity* is here described, which is the chief, and the description whereof makes the body of this prophecy. The sum of it is, that Egypt for a long time should be delivered up into the power of mighty and severe foreign rulers, who should so hardly and imperiously treat the nation, that Egypt should be deprived of all its former prosperity and glory, and be reduced to a state of the utmost distress and most abject slavery. This prophecy with the utmost propriety and justice may be applied to the Persians, and especially to Cambyfes and Ochus; one of whom put a yoke upon the neck of the Egyptians, and the other riveted it there; and who are both branded in history for cruel tyrants and monsters of men. The Egyptians said, that Cambyfes, after his killing of Apis, was stricken with madness; but his actions, says Dr. Prideaux after Herodotus, shewed him to have been mad long before. He could hardly have performed those great exploits if he had been a downright madman; and yet it is certain that he was very much like one; there was a mixture of barbarity and madness in all his behaviour. And Ochus was the cruellest and worst of all the kings of Persia, and was so destructive and oppressive to Egypt in particular, that his favourite eunuch Bagoas, who was an Egyptian, in revenge poisoned him: the favours shewn to himself could not compensate for the wrongs done to his country. No other allegation is wanting to prove that the Persian yoke was galling and intolerable to the Egyptians in the extreme, than their frequent revolts and rebellions, which served still but to augment their misery and enslave them more and more. See Bishop Newton.

*Ver. 5—7. And the waters shall fail*] These verses should be rendered thus: *And the waters shall fail from the sea,*  
[from

and the river shall be wasted and dried up.

6 And they shall turn the rivers far away; and the brooks of defence shall be emptied and dried up: the reeds and flags shall wither.

7 The paper reeds by the brooks, by the mouth of the brooks, and every thing sown by the brooks, shall wither, be driven away, and be no more.

8 The fishers also shall mourn, and all they that cast angle into the brooks shall lament, and they that spread nets upon the waters shall languish.

9 Moreover, they that work in fine flax, and they that weave net-works, shall be confounded.

10 And they shall be broken in the purposes thereof, all that make sluices and ponds for fish.

11 ¶ Surely the princes of Zoan are fools, the counsel of the wise counsellors of Pharaoh is become brutish: how say ye unto Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings?

12 Where are they? where are thy wise men? and let them tell thee now, and let them know what the LORD of Hosts hath purposed upon Egypt.

13 The princes of Zoan are become fools, the princes of Noph are deceived; they have also seduced Egypt, even they that are the stay of the tribes thereof.

14 The LORD hath mingled a perverse

[from the Nile, which is frequently, both in Scripture, and in profane writers, termed the sea. See Nahum, iii. 8. Ezek. xxxii. 2, 3. and Seneca, *Quæst. Nat.* lib. iv. c. 2.] and the river [the Nile] shall be wasted and dried up, ver. 6. and the rivers shall be turned back: The rivers of Egypt shall be emptied and dried up; the reed and the lotus shall languish; ver. 7. the papyrus near the brooks on the banks of the rivers, and every thing sown by the river, shall wither: it shall be driven back; it shall be no more. See Vitringa. The prophet in these words exhibits the state of the kingdom of Egypt, spoiled, plundered, languishing; and in the next verses its general mourning and lamentation on that account, and both metaphorically. Here he supposes a great tempest to be raised in Egypt, which should drive back the waters of the Nile, dry up its rivulets and channels, and so break, throw down, and destroy, all the productions of the Nile, that they should entirely perish. The meaning of which is, that those enemies, or cruel lords, who should reduce Egypt into servitude, should destroy all the plenty and abundance of Egypt, and plunder all the good things of that kingdom. The Nile here figures out the whole kingdom of Egypt; the reed, the lotus, the papyrus, and the other productions of the Nile, signify the riches, merchandise, and whatever was found in the flourishing state of Egypt: and as, when the waters of the Nile are withdrawn, or dried up, or do not rise to their proper height, all things languish and wither in Egypt, and the greatest poverty and necessity ensue; so the kingdom of Egypt, being depressed under the dominion of its cruel lords, the Persians, who should rule it by rapacious governors, (for this is the exiccation of the Nile,) all things should languish in that kingdom; the cities with the temples and ornaments be subverted; their riches consumed by strangers, and their lands left uncultivated. In short, the face of their country should be desolate and melancholy, as when the Nile withheld its necessary overflowings. See Vitringa, *Exod.* vii. 19. and the *Observations*, p. 367; the author of which remarks, that the rivers mentioned in the 6th verse mean the branches of the Nile, by which its waters pass into the

sea; as the brooks mean the canals drawn by Egyptian princes from the river.

Ver. 8—10. *The fishers also shall mourn*] The prophet here sets forth the common and universal grief of the Egyptian nation, upon the calamity above described. The 10th verse should be rendered, *And their stamina [or net-works] shall be broken; all that make drag-nets for pond-fish [shall be confounded]*. In this passage three things are supposed; first, that the fish in Egypt, as well in the Nile, as in the lakes and ponds which were formed by the waters of that river, were abundant; secondly, that flax, and that of the better kind, was used for fishing; and thirdly, that this flax was of Egypt; particulars well known from history: hence the letter of the passage is clear enough. The metaphorical sense is this: the persons who reaped advantage from the Nile and its branches were the fishermen, and the makers of nets for those fishermen; who may be considered in a more general or particular view. If we consider them in general, by the fishermen of the Nile may be understood all the Egyptians of the higher class, who from the abundance of that kingdom gained their wealth; and by the makers of the nets for the fishermen, those of inferior rank in the state, who are doomed to labour for the advantage of others. If under this general sense a more particular one may be included, the fishermen may mean those in the state, who, by their superior policy and art, whether by the hook or net, gained wealth and advantages to themselves, and kept all the meaner artificers and mechanics in subordination to them. The former, the *Demetriuses*, who made the silver shrines; the latter, the *craftsmen* who had their livelihood thence. See *Acts*, xix. 24. The plain meaning is, that all the inhabitants of Egypt, high and low, should mutually deplore this common calamity.

Ver. 11—15. *Surely the princes of Zoan are fools, &c.] Surely the princes of Zoan are fools; the very wisest of Pharaoh's counsellors: counsel is become brutish. How will you boast unto Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings? ver. 13.—They have also seduced Egypt, even the chiefs of the tribes thereof; ver. 14. The Lord hath mingled in the*

spirit in the midst thereof: and they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof, as a drunken *man* staggereth in his vomit.

15 Neither shall there be *any* work for Egypt, which the head or tail, branch or rush, may do.

16 In that day shall Egypt be like unto women: and it shall be afraid and fear, because of the shaking of the hand of the LORD

of Hosts, which he shaketh over it.

17 And the land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt, every one that maketh mention thereof shall be afraid in himself, because of the counsel of the LORD of Hosts, which he hath determined against it.

18 ¶ In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the LORD of Hosts; one shall be called, The city of destruction.

*midst of them a spirit of giddiness, &c.* From the 11th to the 18th verse, we have the immediate causes of the Egyptian calamity; the first of which, contained in the present passage, is their want of salutary counsel; and here occurs, *first*, a proposition concerning the folly of the counsellors of Pharaoh, in ver. 11. *Secondly*, an upbraiding of their imprudence; the discourse being first turned to these counsellors themselves, and then to Pharaoh,—middle of ver. 11. and ver. 12. *Thirdly*, a confirmation of the proposition, ver. 13. *Fourthly*, the cause of this imprudence and stupidity, namely, the divine judgment, ver. 14, 15. The meaning of the last verse is, that there should be such confusion in the state, such perturbation of judgment, and want of counsel, that there should be no man in the state, of political or sacerdotal order, fit to give honest and salutary advice; they should all labour under the same disease of mind, ch. ix. 14. The reader will observe with how fine a gradation the prophet rises in this passage; wherein he alludes to the high antiquity of the Egyptian government, and their fame for wisdom, and acknowledges their claim to both these particulars; and indeed the very force of his exultation depends upon the truth of it: for, what reason is there for insisting so much on the power and wisdom of God, in *destroying the council of Egypt*, if *Pharaoh and his counsellors* only pretended to be, but were not, *wise*, nor yet *the sons of ancient kings*? In general it may be said, that Egypt would not have become so easy a prey to so many foreign enemies, but through the excessive weakness of the Egyptians, both in counsel and action. They had not the courage to defend themselves. They trusted to their Grecian and other mercenaries, who, instead of defending, were often the first to betray them. To finish this particular, let any one shew us now the least trace of learning or wisdom, which is similar to what this nation was formerly celebrated for, if he can; and if he cannot, let him own that this prophecy is fulfilled, even in the present state of Egypt. See Divine Leg. Newton, and Vitringa.

*Ver. 16, 17. In that day shall Egypt be like unto women*] The cowardice and effeminacy of the people in general, joined with their fear and trepidation, is here set forth as the other cause of their calamity; and the reason of this, among other things, is drawn from a sense of the divine judgment. *They shall be like women*; and this, *because of the shaking of the hand of the Lord of Hosts, which he shall shake over them*; that is to say, because they shall see and perceive that they are borne down by some greater power, even

that of the Divinity; and (which some of them shall discern) that very Divinity whom the Jews worshipped at Jerusalem. In consequence of this, it is added in the 17th verse, *And the land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt*; that is to say, the Egyptians, crushed by these severe judgments, shall recollect the prophecies delivered by the prophets of the true God concerning this very calamity, and whereof they had obtained the knowledge. And when many of them, on the truth of these predictions, should begin to discern the majesty and supreme power of the God of Israel, it should come to pass, that upon the mention of the land of Judah, the peculiar habitation of that God, they should fear and tremble. The last words of this verse, as well as those in the 18th, abundantly prove the propriety of this interpretation. See the preceding note, respecting the completion of this part of the prophecy, and the note on chap. xviii. 7.

*Ver. 18. In that day, &c.*] The latter part of this prophecy contains an account of the salutary benefits, temporal as well as spiritual, which God would bestow on Egypt after the above-mentioned calamity. Isaiah, to whom God had most clearly revealed the mystery of the calling of the nations to the grace of Christ, every where takes occasion to speak of it; and frequently finishes his prophecies concerning the nations, with a promise of the salutary blessings determined by God for them; but he does this no where more explicitly than in the present passage. He takes the most convenient occasion of passing from one argument to the other: he had said, that some of the Egyptians, when, under this calamity and oppression, they should observe the impotence of their gods, and seriously reflect upon the true cause of this judgment, should turn their minds to the God of Israel, and, under the sense of what he had foretold by his prophets, should tremble with fear at the mention of him. Isaiah teaches that this servile fear and trembling should in time [*after that day, or time*] be turned into religious fear; with this effect, that *many* Egyptians, not all, should *speak the language of Canaan*; that is to say, profess the true religion. For the analysis of this period, see on the 1st verse. The proposition has two members or gradations, distinguished by the prophet. The former in this verse, wherein the prophet assures us, that after the time of the preceding calamity, there should be *five cities in Egypt*, who should profess the true religion, and that one of them should be *Heliopolis*; for, instead of the *city of destruction*, we may read, the *city of the sun*, or *Heliopolis*, a celebrated city in Egypt, and most particularly remarkable for

19 In that day shall there be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the LORD.

20 And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the LORD of Hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the LORD because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a saviour, and a great one; and he shall deliver them.

21 And the LORD shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the LORD in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the LORD, and perform it.

22 And the LORD shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal it; and they shall return even to the LORD, and he shall be intreated of them, and shall heal them.

for its superstition. It is said, that the conversion of the Egyptians should be effected principally in *five cities*. If a certain number be not put for an uncertain, the five cities wherein the worship of the one true God was first received, were, *Heliopolis*, which is particularly named in the text, and the four others, mentioned Jerem. xlv. 1. viz. *Migdol*, or *Magdolum*, *Takpanbes*, or *Daphe*, *Noph*, or *Memphis*, and that in the country of *Pathras*, or *Thebais*, not mentioned by name, perhaps *Amönno* or *Diospolis*. There the Jews chiefly resided at that time; and some good men, mingled among them, might open these prophecies to the Egyptians; and they themselves, when they saw them fulfilled, might embrace the Jewish religion. See Bishop Newton, vol. i. p. 374. and Vitringa.

Ver. 19. In that day shall there be an altar, &c.] In this and the former part of the next verse, we have the second member or article of the general proposition. The discourse rises, as is every where the case with our prophet. It seems strange to assert that the Egyptians, struck by the true God, should tremble with a servile fear at the mention of his name. It seems stranger still that they, or some of them, from the principles of affection and internal reverence, should become worshippers of the true God; and yet what is related in this verse is much more; that there should be an altar to the Lord, &c.—for a sign, and for a witness, ver. 20. that Egypt should be now devoted to the Lord of Hosts. By *pillar*, some understand such a one as that which was erected by Jacob at Beth-el: Vitringa renders the word מצבה *matsebah*, a monument, who thinks that this was some column, consecrated to God, in order to preserve the memory of this great event; the introduction of the true religion into Egypt. See 1 Sam. vii. 12. and Mal. i. 11. The meaning of the passage is, that the temple-service shall be abolished, and the God of Israel worshipped with the most solemn rites, even in the most abhorred and un sanctified places, such as the Jews esteemed Egypt. This is the more remote meaning of this prophecy, as it alludes to the Christian dispensation. In its primary sense it relates to the conversion of the Egyptians to the Jewish religion; and this was brought about by the following progressive changes. Alexander the Great transplanted many of the Jews to Alexandria, and allowed them extraordinary immunities equal to those of the Macedonians themselves. Ptolemy Soter carried more of them into Egypt, who enjoyed such advantages that many of them were allured to settle there. Ptolemy Philadelphus redeemed and released the captive Jews; and in his and his father's reign, the Jewish scriptures were translated into Greek. Ptolemy Euergetes, having subdued Syria, did

not sacrifice to the gods of Egypt in acknowledgment of his victory; but, coming to Jerusalem, made his oblations to God after the manner of the Jews. Ptolemy Philometor, and his queen Cleopatra, committed the whole management of the kingdom to two Jews, Onias and Dositheus, who were the chief ministers and generals. This Onias obtained a licence to build a temple for the Jews in Egypt, alleging for that purpose this very prophecy; and the king and queen, in their rescript, make mention of the law, and of Isaiah, and express a dread of offending God. The place chosen for this temple was in the prefecture of Heliopolis, or the city of the sun, likewise mentioned in prophecy. It was built after the model of the temple of Jerusalem, but not so sumptuous. Onias himself was made high-priest; other priests and Levites were appointed for the ministrations, and divine service was daily performed there in the same manner as at Jerusalem, and continued as long; for Vespasian, having destroyed the temple at Jerusalem, ordered this to be demolished also. See Newton Proph. vol. i. p. 375.

Ver. 20—22. For they shall cry unto the Lord] The prophet here sets forth the causes of this happy change in Egypt, with its immediate effects. The *impulsive* cause he shews to be their cry to Jehovah, on account of their oppressors; the *instrumental* some Saviour or avenger; some *great one* so called, who should deliver them from their oppression, ver. 20. The immediate effects are said to be, *first*, true faith, to be produced or confirmed in the Egyptians by this means, ver. 21.; *secondly*, the *healing of them*, as to their external state, and the restoration of their government, ver. 22. Here it is plainly foretold, that a *great prince, sent by God* from a foreign country, should deliver the Egyptians from their Persian oppressors, and heal their country, which was smitten of God and afflicted; and who could this be but Alexander, who is always distinguished by the name of *the great*, and whose first successor in Egypt was called *the great Ptolemy*, and Ptolemy Soter, or *the saviour*? Upon Alexander's first coming into Egypt, the people all cheerfully submitted to him; for which reason he treated them with kindness, built a city there called *Alexandria*, appointed one of their own country for their civil governor, and permitted them to be governed by their own laws and customs. By these regulations, and the gentle administration of some of the Ptolemies, Egypt revived, trade and learning flourished, and for a while peace and plenty blessed the land. But it is more largely foretold, ver. 21. that about the same time the true religion and worship of the God of Israel should spread in Egypt; and what event was ever more unlikely

23 ¶ In that day shall there be a high way out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with

the Assyrians.

24 In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, *even* a blessing in the midst of the land.

to happen than the conversion of a people who looked upon themselves as the most learned in the world, to the religion of those whom they despised; and at a time too when these Egyptians were so sunk in superstition and idolatry of the grossest kind? It is certain, that many of the Jews fled into Egypt after Nebuchadnezzar had taken Jerusalem, and carried with them Jeremiah, who there uttered many of his prophecies concerning the conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar (see Jer. xliii, &c.). Hence, and by the means above described, some knowledge of God, and some notice of the prophecies, might easily be derived to the Egyptians. By these means the Lord must in some degree have been known to Egypt, and the Egyptians have been known to the Lord; and without doubt there must have been many proselytes among them. With those who came up to the feast of Pentecost, Acts, ii. 10. there are particularly mentioned, *the dwellers in Egypt, and in the parts of Lybia about Cyrene, Jews and proselytes.* Nay, from the instance of Candace's eunuch, Acts, viii. 27. we may infer that there were proselytes even beyond Egypt in Ethiopia. Thus were the Jews settled and encouraged in Egypt; inasmuch that Philo represents their number as not less than ten hundred thousand men. Bishop Newton, as above.

*Vcr. 23—25. In that day shall there be a high way]* We have here the wonderful consequence of this benefit of divine grace toward the Egyptians, namely, their spiritual alliance with the Assyrians and Israelites, with a great abundance of the divine blessing. The sum of the period is, that the Egyptians, being brought to the knowledge of true religion, should enjoy a communion of that religion with the Assyrians, from whom they were formerly greatly divided; and that they should cultivate this communion by an easy way; that is, in the most friendly and amicable manner, as the Assyrians do in return with the Egyptians, and that both should be in communion with the Israelites; that they should constitute one church, composed as it were of three members, should enjoy the same spiritual privileges, and in this state should jointly share a large degree of the divine blessings: things which, however unlikely when Isaiah wrote, were abundantly proved by the event; for the Jews were not only favoured by the Egyptians, as we have shewn in the former note, but also by the kings of Syria. Seleucus Nicator made them free of the cities which he built in Asia and the lower Syria, and of Antioch itself, the capital of his kingdom, and granted the same rights and privileges to them as to the Greeks and Macedonians. Antiochus the Great published several decrees in favour of those who dwelt in Mesopotamia and Babylon. Josephus informs us, that they gained many proselytes in Antioch; and thus, by means of the Jews and proselytes dwelling in Egypt and Syria, Israel, Egypt, and Syria, were in some measure united in the same worship. But the prophecy was more fully accomplished when their countries became Christian, and mul-

titudes in each nation were made members of the same body in Christ Jesus. See Bishop Newton.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Egypt had often been a broken reed to the house of Judah, who, notwithstanding the misery their fathers had there endured, were ever flying thither for help, and making this their confidence, though ever to their hurt. God therefore will in the destruction of Egypt cut off this false resource. We have here,

1. The terror of Egypt, and the helplessness of their idol-gods, when the Lord cometh on the swift cloud, in terrible majesty, hastening as a judge to condemn the malefactors; or as a general at the head of his troops, with impetuous speed, and irresistible power, to lay the country waste before him. At his presence the idols, like Dagon's image before the ark, shall be confounded, and their courageous soldiers be utterly dispirited. *Note;* Before an avenging God who can stand?

2. Intestine feuds shall embroil them, and lay them more open to the invader. *Note;* They are the greatest enemies of their country, who foment a spirit of faction, and seek to embroil brother against brother.

3. A spirit of infatuation and folly shall seize the Egyptians. Their princes and wisest counsellors, notwithstanding their boasts of science, and descent from a long train of illustrious ancestors, are become brutish and fools, unable to discover the divine purposes; neither can their idols or magicians inform them. Deceived themselves, their princes have deceived their country; and they who should have been the stay thereof, hasten its destruction. Like men intoxicated with wine, they have drunk of the cup of error, and every step they take is wrong. Their counsels are weak, unsteady, perverse, and by them the state is led to the precipice of ruin. *Note;* It is a needful and weighty petition of the Litany of the church of England, *That it may please thee to endue the Lords of the council and all the nobility, with grace, wisdom, and understanding.*

4. They shall be sold into the hand of a cruel lord or lords; either the twelve tyrants who succeeded Setbon, or Psammiticus who united the monarchy under himself; or rather the Persian emperors, Cambyses and Ochus, to whom the character aptly applies. See the Critical Annotations. *Note;* (1.) A tyrant king is the scourge of his land. (2.) How great reason have we to bless God for the mild government we enjoy!

5. The sources of their riches and commerce should be cut off, and want and wretchedness ensue. The Nile, the great cause of Egypt's fertility, shall fail them, occasioned by such a drought as would prevent its usual overflowing, or by the imprudent attempts of their kings, one of whom Pharaoh Necho, by endeavouring to join the Nile with the Red Sea, is said to have greatly weakened its force; the consequence of which would be, [1.] That their defence would be gone, the ditches with the water of the Nile filled round their fortified places being drained. [2.] That

25 Whom the LORD of Hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.

That famine would be in their land, because, as they have no rain in Egypt, the Nile not rising as usual, nothing would grow; and if the reeds on its banks, from whence paper and a variety of other things were made, withered for want of moisture, much more would all the fruits of the ground. [3.] Even their fish, which in such vast plenty abounded, would be no more: the river dried up, the fishermen destitute of employment would mourn, and the people, who were generally supported by the fish, be reduced to deep distress. Nor shall the rich be able to supply their tables, when their sluices and ponds shall alike be exhausted. [4.] Their manufactories, for want of flax, shall be at a stand: they who wove in the loom, or spun, or made their nets, now unemployed, would pine away in want, and an entire stop be put to their trade and commerce, there being no work *which the head or tail, branch or rush, may do.* *Note;* Our common blessings are grievously overlooked; but one year of drought, that should destroy our harvest, would sensibly teach us the value of the mercies that we disregard. May our ingratitude and unmindfulness of God never provoke him thus to plague us!

6. The devastation of Judæa by the Assyrian hosts would spread a panic among them; pangs shall come upon them as on a travailing woman, beholding the hand of the Lord thus lifted up; justly apprehensive of the vicinity of the victorious army; and fearing that, if God's own people be not spared, Egypt may not hope to escape, against which the decree is gone forth. *Note;* (1.) When one sinner is cut down, it becomes the survivors to look and tremble. (2.) When the wicked persist in their perverse way, the counsel of the Lord is determined for their destruction.

2dly, In the midst of wrath a beam of mercy gladdens the dreary scene. There is yet hope in their end, and spiritual blessings in store, which would infinitely outweigh the heaviest temporal calamities. The accomplishment of this prophecy may refer to the conversion of many of them by the Jews, who fled into Egypt from the Assyrians; but still more to the times of the Gospel, when Egypt, by the preaching of St. Mark and others, was early converted to the Christian faith; and also, perhaps, to some great events which should precede the establishment of Christ's universal reign.

1. Their cities shall speak the language of Canaan, becoming acquainted with the word of God, and conversing with the people of God. *One shall be called the city of destruction, or, of the Sun:* where idolatry was most rooted, the grace of God shall be most prevalent; or, the city which refused the Gospel, would be devoted to ruin. *Note;* (1.) When the soul is converted to God, we learn a new language; the love of God in Christ, and his rich salvation, known and believed, are the pleasing subjects of our conversation, a language which to the world appears strange and unknown. (2.) That soul is doomed to destruction which continues a stranger to the divine teachings, and experimentally unacquainted with the truths of gospel grace.

2. The worship of God should be publicly established. The names of idols should come no more into their lips, but their appeals be made to the heart-searching Jehovah, and to the Lord Jesus would they pledge their fidelity. To him shall they go, as the only altar where atonement had been made for their sins, and where acceptance of their services can be alone obtained. And in the utmost borders a pillar shall be erected, intimating the general profession of the faith of Christ throughout the land. *Note;* (1.) An oath is a solemn act of religion, and therefore to God alone must we appeal. (2.) Christ is our altar, in and by whom alone our persons and services can be accepted of God.

3. God's truth being thus embraced, and his ordinances of worship established, they would be a sign between him and his people. In time of distress, when they cry unto him, he will hear and answer them; and, by a Saviour, a great one, yea, an Almighty Saviour, Jesus, deliver them from every oppressor, from sin, Satan, death, hell, and every foe\*. *Note;* God's ears are ever open to the prayers of his people, and Jesus ever near to help his afflicted ones. While we pray, he will never leave nor forsake us. (2.) They who feel that they have great sins, and tremble under their great corruptions, should remember that they have a great Redeemer, able to save to the uttermost.

4. They shall be brought to the knowledge of God, and, as the blessed effect of it, shall have their hearts engaged to him, paying the grateful tribute of praise and thanksgiving for his mercies. By the translation of the Hebrew scriptures into Greek at Alexandria, the knowledge of divine truth was, in a measure, laid open; but more especially were they enlightened, when the ministers of Christ carried the Gospel thither, and preached unto them the grace which is in Jesus Christ.

5. By his word and providences he will smite their hearts, effectually awakening their consciences; and as he wounds, healing them, forgiving their sins, and converting their souls. *Note;* When God wounds, it is to heal, not to destroy.

6. They shall be admitted into the communion of God's saints. All quarrels now terminated, Egypt and Assyria should become friends, and maintain intimate intercourse, and both unite in the service of the same God; and Israel, which lay between them, through the Saviour, who was of their stock, should become a blessing to them; and, cordially uniting with them, the distinction of Jew and Gentile shall cease, when they become one fold under one shepherd. For thus God, as their common Father, will regard them. Egypt is equally his people with Israel his inheritance, and blessed in the same covenant of grace; and Assyria, alike the work of his hands, will be created anew in Christ Jesus, and all united in him, and members one of another. *Note;* They who are the servants of the same God, bought with the same blood, and begotten by the same spirit, should unite in love, lay aside all animosities, and with one mind and one mouth join in his worship and praise.

\* For the literal interpretation see the Critical Annotations.



## C H A P. XX.

*A type prefiguring the shameful captivity of Egypt and Ethiopia.*

[Before Christ 714.]

**I**N the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, (when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him,) and fought against Ashdod and took it;

2 At the same time spake the LORD by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, Go and looke the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoe from thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot.

3 And the LORD said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three

years for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia;

4 So shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, even with *their* buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt.

5 And they shall be afraid and ashamed of Ethiopia their expectation, and of Egypt their glory.

6 And the inhabitants of this isle shall say in that day, Behold, such is our expectation, whither we flee for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria: and how shall we escape?

## C H A P. XX.

*Ver. 1. In the year that Tartan came, &c.]* We have in this chapter an addition to the 5th discourse, in which the prophet is said to have shewn himself, by the divine command, *naked and barefooted* to the Jews, to teach them by this sign, which also he explains, that the Egyptians and Ethiopians, on whose assistance the Ephraimites and Jews, together with the Philistines, confided in their distress, should be afflicted by the Assyrian king Sargon, and should be led away captive, naked, and barefoot, to their own extreme shame, and the utter disappointment and mortification of their confederates. The chapter contains an inscription, which informs us of the time of the delivery of the prophecy, and of the circumstances, (ver. 1.) and the prophecy; in which two things are to be observed; namely, *first*, the revelation, which contains a command to the prophet, wherein he is enjoined to do something, ver. 2. and to say something, ver. 3, 4. *Secondly*, the scope and consequence of the prophecy, ver. 5, 6. *Tartan* is mentioned 2 Kings, xviii. 17. as one of the generals of Sennacherib, who is commonly supposed to be here called *Sargon*, according to an ancient custom, whereby the eastern kings had usually several names; though Vitringa is of opinion, that Salmanezzer is here meant, and that the *year* which the prophet here marks out was the 7th year of king Hezekiah; that immediately following the taking of Samaria by this same Salmanezzer. See 2 Kings, xviii. 9, 10. Vitringa, and the Univ. Hist. vol. xviii. p. 254.

*Ver. 2. Spake the Lord by Isaiah, &c.]* Or, *To Isaiah, &c.* By *sackcloth* is meant the hairy garment usually worn by prophets. By *naked* is meant, no more than that the prophet went without his upper garment: It was customary for captives to go about in this manner. See 1 Sam. xix. 24. 2 Sam. vi. 14, 15. Matth. iii. 4. This action was agreeable to the mode of instruction made use of in those times; and, as it was intended to excite the attention of the Israelites, was not only consistent with the custom of the times, but likewise very well adapted to promote that intention. See Divine Leg. vol. iii. and Vitringa.

*Ver. 3. Three years for a sign.]* *A three years' sign.* The

meaning seems to be, not that Isaiah walked three years *naked and barefooted*, but that he walked naked and barefoot for a sign of what should happen three years afterwards.

*Ver. 5, 6. And they shall be afraid, &c.]* We have, in these words, the consequence of the divine judgment upon the Egyptians and Cushites; and the scope of the prophecy, namely, to convince the inhabitants of Palestine, and, among these, some factious persons in Jerusalem, of the vanity of the confidence which they placed in the Egyptians and Cushites, as their tutelar deity; for when they should see the completion of this prophecy, they would then condemn their own folly, for placing their expectations on so feeble a defence. All the maritime places, or places on the sea-coast, are called by the word *Ysai, isle*; the prophet therefore may here mean the sea-coasts of Palestine, where was the city of Ashdod, or *Azotus*. Some, who imagine that the Scriptures call any place or country an *isle*, suppose that the prophet means Judah, or Jerusalem; but the truth seems to be, that he is to be understood as speaking largely and generally of the inhabitants of Palestine. See Vitringa.

REFLECTIONS.—We have here,

1. The date of the prophecy. See the Critical Annotations.
2. The sign given of the destruction to be brought on Egypt and Ethiopia. Isaiah is commanded to take off his habit of sackcloth, (which, as a prophet, he wore to signify his deadness to the ornaments of dress, or as mourning over the desolations of Judah and Israel,) to put off his shoes, and to walk naked, probably not absolutely so, but stripped of his upper garment, and barefoot. How long he continued to go thus is not certain; whether once, or three days, a day for a year, or possibly three years, as our English translation seems to imply; though the three years rather refer to the prophecy, which should be accomplished after that time; or imply that so long a time the Assyrian king would employ in subduing them. See the Notes. The prophet, without hesitation, as a faithful servant, obeys the divine command, dangerous as it might be to his health, and however much it exposed his person to contempt. And

## CHAP. XXI.

*The prophet, bewailing the captivity of his people, seeth in a vision the fall of Babylon by the Medes and Persians. Edom, scorning the prophet, is moved to repentance. The fit time of Arabia's calamity.*

[Before Christ 714.]

**T**HE burden of the desert of the sea. As whirlwinds in the south pass through ;

so it cometh from the desert, from a terrible land.

2 A grievous vision is declared unto me ; the treacherous dealer dealeth treacherously, and the spoiler spoileth, Go up, O Elam ; besiege, O Media : all the fighting thereof have I made to cease.

God explains the sign, as prefiguring the miserable and shameful captivity of the Egyptians and Ethiopians, who should thus be led away prisoners by the Assyrians. *Note* ; (1.) When duty calls, we must trust health, character, and all into God's hands. If he says, Well done, good and faithful servant, it will infinitely overbalance every inconvenience or insult that we may have received. (2.) Miserable is the condition of these poor captives ; but how much more miserable those slaves of sin, who are led captive by the devil at his will ! What confusion will cover them, when, in the presence of God ; his saints and angels, the shame of their nakedness shall appear, and no eye pity them !

3. The warning given the Jews of the folly of depending on these nations. Ethiopia was their trust, and Egypt the ally in which they gloried ; but now, afraid at the ruin of these potent neighbours, and confounded at seeing their supports thus removed, *the inhabitants of this isle*, Palestine, so called, *shall say*, Behold such is our expectation, so vain, so foolish, *whither we flee for help*, even to those who cannot help themselves ; and *how then shall we escape*, when mightier foes are unable to withstand the victorious arms of the Assyrian army ? *Note* ; Creature-confidences will assuredly fail us ; and they who have neglected to make God their refuge in the day of calamity, will be abandoned to despair, and too late bewail their folly.

## CHAP. XXI.

*Ver. 1. The burden of the desert of the sea.*] The sixth discourse contained in this chapter represents, under a mystical name, Babylon, (the rulers whereof made great desolations in the world, and much distressed many other nations as well as the Jews,) besieged and overthrown by the Medes and Persians, after a long and patient expectation hereof by the people of God ; and that in the night, when the Babylonians were luxuriously enjoying themselves ; an event most pleasing and joyful to the Jewish exiles : and hereto is subjoined the fate of the Edomites, and of the Arabians. It is not certain at what time this prophecy was delivered : but it seems most probable that it was delivered at the same time with that immediately preceding ; that is, in the seventh year of king Hezekiah. It contains, *first*, an inscription, and *secondly*, the body of the prophecy ; wherein we have, *first*, a prediction of the fall of Babylon, for its crimes committed against the people of God, ver. 1—5 ; *secondly*, an emblematical confirmation hereof ; ver. 6—9 ; and *thirdly*, the conclusion, ver. 10. *The desert of the sea*, taken literally, signifies a vast tract of plain land, which is surrounded and sometimes overflowed

with much water ; but figuratively, a vast empire, which is sustained by a populous metropolis. It seems probable, that the prophet uses the expression here figuratively, and yet alludes to some analogous property of those countries which formed a principal part of the Babylonish dominions. See Ezek. xx. 35. and Hosea, ii. 14. Vitringa is of opinion, that the sea here alluded to was the Euphrates. See Jer. li. 36. Zech. x. 11. and Rev. xvii. 3, 15. where we find that St. John, when he was to see the spiritual Babylon, was carried into the *Wilderness*, where he beheld a woman sitting upon a scarlet-coloured beast, and that *near many waters*. See chap. xiv. 23. and Vitringa.

*As whirlwinds*—*Ver. 2. The spoiler spoileth.*] This prophecy has principally for its object the fall of Babylon ; but, as the divine judgment against the Babylonians had sufficient foundation, the Holy Spirit, before he foretells the fate of Babylon, exhibits to the prophet, in vision, those grievous evils which the kings of Babylon should bring perfidiously upon other nations, and principally upon the Jews ; which done, in an extatic rapture, he calls upon the Medes and Persians to besiege and destroy Babylon. He sees, therefore, in a vision, Nebuchadnezzar moving with his forces from Babylon to subdue those people of Asia who refused his yoke, or had shaken it off ; among whom were the Jews. He compares this prince, incited by rage and revenge, and armed with great power, to *whirlwinds in the south*, rushing with great force, and carrying away whatever opposed them : He beholds him like a southern tempest troubling Asia ; promiscuously raging upon all who refuse to obey him ; invading Jerusalem, impiously destroying the temple of the true God, and leading the remnant of his people into banishment ; which revelation he calls a *hard or grievous vision*. So I understand these words, says Vitringa, after a long and most serious consideration ; and, I think, rightly. Some understand them of Cyrus, to whom yet it is evident the words, *the treacherous dealer*, &c. cannot be applied. See Jerem. iv. 6, 7. 11.

*Ver. 2. Go up, O Elam ; besiege, O Media !*] The prophet, in a rapture, had various images succeeding one another before his sight. He had just beheld the Babylonians raging against Asia and Judæa. Presently, this scene being removed, he beholds the city of Babylon itself flourishing in strength and glory ; then he observes the motion of a hostile army towards this city, which he understands to consist of the Medes and Persians, raised up by the divine providence to besiege Babylon, and punish it for its pride and wickedness ; and he hears at the same moment of time a *divine voice*, commanding this people to approach and besiege

3 Therefore are my loins filled with pain: pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of a woman that travaileth: I was bowed down at the hearing of it; I was dismayed at the seeing of it.

4 My heart panted, fearfulness affrighted me: the night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear unto me.

5 Prepare the table, watch in the watch-tower, eat, drink; arise, ye princes, and anoint the shield.

6 For thus hath the LORD said unto me, Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he

seeth.

7 And he saw a chariot with a couple of horsemen, a chariot of asses, and a chariot of camels; and he hearkened diligently with much heed:

8 And he cried, A lion: My lord, I stand continually upon the watch-tower in the day-time, and I am set in my ward whole nights:

9 And, behold, here cometh a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground.

siege Babylon, with a prediction of undoubted success, which he involves in a short consolatory sentence; *All the fighting thereof I have made to cease*: that is, "God hath made all that fighting, all those groans and calamities which Babylon had brought upon other nations, and upon the people of God also, to cease and be no more, having determined the destruction of Babylon itself." *Elam* was an old name for Persia, for the name of *Persia* does not appear to have been known in Isaiah's time. The Persians seem to have taken their name from becoming horsemen in the time of Cyrus. The country is called *Paras*, and the inhabitants *Parasi*, which signifies both *Persians* and *horsemen*. Babylon was accordingly besieged by the united force of the Medes and Persians under the command of Cyrus the Persian, the nephew and son-in-law of the king of the Medes. If by *Elam* we understand the province strictly so called, it is no less true that this also, though subject to Babylon, rose up against it on account of the generous behaviour of Cyrus to Panthea. See Bp. Newton and Vittinga.

*Ver. 3—5. Therefore are my loins filled with pain, &c.]* We have here a symbolical description of the greatness of the Babylonish calamity; the prophet exhibiting in himself, as in a figure, an emblem of the extreme distress, consternation, and horror, which should ensue upon this occasion. See ch. xv. 5. xvi. 8, 9. Luke, xxi. 26. The expression, *The night of my pleasure*, alludes to the remarkable circumstance of Babylon's being taken in the night of an annual festival, which is more fully set forth in the fifth verse. Vittinga renders it very properly, *The table is spread: the watchman stands upon the watch; they eat; they drink: Arise now, ye princes, &c.* where, as in a picture, the revelling of the Babylonians is described, when the divine command is given to the Medes and Persians to seize this proper moment; *Arise, ye princes; anoint the shield*, which is to the same purpose with what Jeremiah says, chap. li. 11, 28, &c. *To anoint the shield* is, in this place, by synecdoche, *Prepare your arms*; and so the Chaldee paraphrast, *wipe, and make bright your arms*. It is remarkable, that Cyrus, when all things were prepared to invade Babylon, uses words very similar to those of the prophet, "But come, arise; prepare your arms; I will lead you on by the help

"of the gods." See Herod. lib. i. cap. 191. and Xenoph. Cyropæd lib. 7. Nothing can be more remarkable than the completion of this prophecy.

*Ver. 6—9. For thus hath the Lord said unto me]* The Holy Spirit, having proposed to make Isaiah, and by him the church, most certain of this memorable event, confirms the preceding revelation by an elegant emblem, offered to the prophet in vision; which confirmation makes the other part of this prophecy. This emblem exhibits to us the prophet commanded by God to *set a watchman*, in this verse; and in what follows, the consequence of the execution of the command; namely, that the watchman appointed by the prophet attended accurately to the least motion of the *nations* against Babylon, and at length, after long expectation, had discovered, and, *like a lion*, had declared with a loud voice what he had seen. The seventh verse should be rendered, *And he saw a cavalcade; two file of horse; with ass-carriages, and carriages of camels; and he attended with very close attention.* The meaning is, that the watchman saw the army of the Medes and Persians, with their usual cavalcade of horse, attended by those beasts of burden, *asses* and *camels*, which accompanied armies in those countries, moving towards Babylon; upon which he gave the greatest attention possible. Vittinga reads in the eighth verse, *And he cried as a lion*; declaring what he now saw; namely, the hostile cavalcade approaching to Babylon; *Behold, here cometh a cavalcade of men; two file of horse*: Immediately after which, he declares the consequence of this approach to the enemy; *Babylon is fallen, is fallen.* See Rev. xviii. 1, 2. This repetition was intended, according to some, to shew the certainty of the event; though Vittinga thinks that it, as well as the whole prophecy, might have a mystical reference to the fall of the spiritual Babylon; as much as to say, "Babylon is fallen, nay, and shall hereafter fall." As to the last expression, *All the graven images of her gods he hath broken*, it is remarkable, that Xerxes, after his return from his unfortunate expedition into Greece, partly out of religious zeal, being a professed enemy to image-worship, and partly to reimburse himself, seized the sacred treasures, plundered or destroyed the temples and idols of Babylon, and thereby accomplished the prophecies of Isaiah; which will gain great light by a com-

10 O my threshing, and the corn of my floor: that which I have heard of the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, have I declared unto you.

11 ¶ The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?

12 The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will en-

quire, enquire ye: return, come.

13 ¶ The burden upon Arabia. In the forest in Arabia shall ye lodge, O ye travelling companies of Dedanim.

14 The inhabitants of the land of Tema brought water to him that was thirsty, they prevented with their bread him that fled.

15 For they fled from the swords, from the drawn sword, and from the bent bow, and from

comparison with what Jeremiah has written on this subject. See Vitringa and Bishop Newton.

Ver. 10. *O my threshing, &c.*] These words, which form the conclusion of the prophecy, contain an address of the prophet to the church, signifying that he had faithfully related to them what God had revealed to him. The church is elegantly called the *threshing-floor* where the true wheat is separated from the chaff. See chap. xxviii. 27. Matt. iii. 12. and Gal. iv. 19.

Ver. 11, 12. *The burden of Dumah*] The neighbouring nations insulting the people of God for the common calamities to which they were exposed together with them, though they boasted themselves to be the elect and favourite people of the Lord, the prophet introduces the Idumæans, in the time of common calamity, inquiring of a Jewish prophet into the quality and duration of that calamity; not quite irreligiously, but doubtfully. The prophet, by whom is meant Isaiah himself, informs them, that the calamity should soon pass from Judæa, and that the *light of the morning* should arise to the Jews, while the Idumæans should be oppressed with a new and unexpected affliction; so that what should be a time of *light* to the Jews, should be to them a time of darkness. The prophet, foreseeing that they would scarcely believe his words, admonishes them that the matter is fixed, as they would find the more accurately they inquired into it. The scene of the prophecy must be fixed to the time of the Babylonish captivity. The prophecy, besides the inscription, contains two parts; the *first* respects the person of the prophet, ver. 11. The *second*, the matter itself; namely, the inquiry of some person or persons among the Idumæans concerning the state of their common calamity, and the answer of the prophet to their inquiry. *Out of Seir*, or mount Seir, means Idumæa. *What of the night?* means, "What have you certain to tell us of the state of the night? How far is it advanced? Do you observe nothing of the morning approaching, and about to drive away this troublesome darkness of the night?" that is to say, "What do you observe of our present distress and calamity? Is there any appearance of its departure, and of the approach of the morning of deliverance?" The prophet answers enigmatically, *the morning cometh*, that is to say, deliverance to the Jews; and *the night*,—to the Idumæans; "To them I will give light; you I will leave in darkness." So St. Jerome and the Chaldee paraphrase. Some conceive that the last clause is an exhortation to the Idumæans to consider their ways, to repent, and turn to God. Schultens renders the 12th verse, *The watchman*

*said, the morning is come, and now night; if ye will swell with rage, swell on; return, come.*

Ver. 13. *The burden upon Arabia*] While God revealed to his prophet the fate of foreign nations, among others he declared that of those Arabians who inhabited the western part of Arabia Deserta or Petræa; that they should be oppressed and driven into flight by the Assyrians, a calamity which should fall upon them within a year. These Arabians bordered upon the Idumæans. This prophecy, besides the inscription, contains *first*, an exordial denunciation of the divine judgment; ver. 13. *Secondly*, A figurative declaration thereof, ver. 14, 15. *Thirdly*, a confirmation, with a discovery of the time when this judgment should be executed, and of the greatness thereof, to be collected from its consequences. The Arabians here mentioned were the Nabathæan Arabians, so called from Nebaioth, who is said to have been the first-born of Ishmael, Gen. xxv. 13. *They are called the children of Kedar*, who was the brother of Nebaioth; and also *inhabitants of the land of Tema*, who was another brother of Nebaioth; and also *Dedanim*; that is to say, the sons or descendants of *Dedan*, who was the son of Jokthan, the son of Abraham by Keturah. See Jer. xlix. 28. The time of the delivery, and that of the completion of this prophecy, it is evident, were closely connected; and Vitringa thinks that it was the same year with that mentioned, chap. xx. 1. when Salmanazer, after having possessed himself of the fortified cities of Palestine, and driven away the Egyptians and Ethiopians, or Cushites, the next year invaded the Nabathæan Arabs, who were of their party, that he might prepare his way for the invasion of Egypt. The meaning of the exordial proposition in this verse is, "O ye Dedanites, who used to follow your business securely in the deserts of Arabia Petræa, you will be compelled, through fear of the enemies' sword, to retire into the *inner parts*, the forests of Arabia, having left your tents and the furniture behind, and to pass your nights in inhospitable places." See Jer. xlix. 8. 30. Diodorus Siculus says of the Arabians, that when they are attacked by any powerful enemy, they fly into the desert, εἰς τὴν ἐρημὸν, as into a place of defence." The ἐρημὸς of Diodorus seems to be the same with the יָרְיָא *iangar* of our prophet; that is to say, the interior recesses of the desert.

Ver. 14, 15. *The inhabitants of the land of Tema*] Or, *O ye inhabitants of the land of Tema, bring ye water to him that is thirsty; prevent, or meet the fugitive with bread.* ver. 15. *For they flee.* We have here a figurative description of this judgment. The prophet beholds the Arabians seized with

the grievousness of war.

16 For thus hath the LORD said unto me, Within a year, according to the years of an hircling, and all the glory of Kedar shall fail :

17 And the residue of the number of archers, the mighty men of the children of Kedar, shall be diminished: for the LORD God of Israel hath spoken it.

great fear; flying without their baggage, on account of the Assyrians, who are pursuing them with their drawn swords. He therefore commands the inhabitants of the land of Tema their relations, to meet them, and relieve their hunger and thirst; under which figure the prophet elegantly sets forth the miserable state of the Nabathæan Arabs, pursued by the Assyrians. The passage elegantly refers to the dry and burning nature of the deserts of Arabia. See Arrian's Hist. Ind. cap. xliii. Hosea, xiii. 5. and Vitringa.

*Ver. 16, 17. For thus hath the Lord said, &c.]* Hitherto the prophet had spoken figuratively: he now ceases to do so. This period contains, *first*, the circumstance of the time connected with the execution of this judgment, and the greatness of the judgment itself. Nothing can be more clear than the former: With respect to the latter, the meaning is, that the Arabians should suffer a grievous slaughter, in which the greater part of their heroes and principal men should fall; while they, deprived of their flocks, tents, furniture, and wealth, should be obliged to save themselves by flight into the interior parts of the desert. The deficiency of history, sacred and prophane, renders the completion of this prophecy more difficult to be ascertained. See Vitringa; who renders the former part of the 17th verse, *And the remaining number of bows of the mighty men of Kedar.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, As Babylon was appointed for a house of bondage to God's people, her destruction is repeatedly foretold, to comfort them in their low estate; and that, when captives there, they may confidently expect to see her ruin, and their deliverance. This prophecy is intitled, *The burden of the desert*, or plain, *of the sea*, as lying in a flat country, surrounded with rivers and lakes; and *a burden*, because of the heavy doom denounced.

1. The invasion of the Medes is described, swift and resistless as the whirlwind from the south, sweeping all before it. *From the desert it, or he, cometh*; Cyrus marching his troops through a desert in his way to Babylon, *from a terrible land*, such as Media was, producing fierce warriors, terrible to their enemies. *A grievous vision is declared unto me*, full of wrath against the Chaldeans. *The treacherous dealer dealeth treacherously*; and *the spoiler spoileth*—Belsazzar, whose wickedness and oppression of God's people brought destruction upon him. Or, as some render the words, *the treacherous dealer hath found a treacherous dealer, and the spoiler one that spoileth*; the Babylonians being repaid in kind by the Persians for their former ravages in Judæa. *Go up, O Elam; besiege, O Media: all the fighting thereof have I made to cease*; either that of the Medes and Persians, fatigued with the length of their march, and the labour of draining the river, in order to open a way into the city; or the fighting of the captive Jews and others in Babylon, who, when the city was taken, regained their liberty.

2. The distress of the king of Babylon is set forth under the image of a travelling woman. Amid the revels of that fatal night, when, rioting with his princes, the sacred vessels of the sanctuary were profaned, the hand-writing on the wall struck with sudden pangs the impious king, and spoke his approaching doom, which is scarcely sooner pronounced than executed, the city that very night being taken, and Belsazzar slain. *Note*; Though the midnight revels of pleasure, and the board of drunkenness, may not be interrupted by such a miraculous hand-writing on the wall, and sinners, joyous and thoughtless, to dance and song devote the day, did they but see what is written in God's book, how quickly would their mirth, like Belsazzar's, be turned into mourning, and their joy into heaviness?

3. The entertainment is made ready at command, and while they sit around the festal board, the watch is set to prevent surprise, and in security they carouse. *Note*, The security of sinners hastens their ruin.

4. In that critical moment the besiegers are preparing for the assault. The princes arise, the shields are ready, and sudden destruction approaches.

5. The prophet is appointed of God, as a watchman posted on the walls, to declare what he sees. On looking he beholds a chariot with two horsemen, perhaps alluding to Cyrus and Darius, and *a chariot of asses*, and *a chariot of camels*, representing the two nations of Medes and Persians, and, on *hearkening diligently*, he perceived the sound of the army rushing on the city, and *he cried, a lion*; Cyrus, for strength and courage compared to that king of beasts, hastening to seize the prey of Babylon. Thus with unwearied vigilance, day and night, the prophet discharged his trust; and now perceiving the chariot and horsemen above described, the Persian and Median army under their generals, entering the city, he cries, *Babylon is fallen, is fallen, and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground.*

In the state and ruin of this proud city we have a figure of Babylon mystical, which shall thus be surprised and destroyed; and many of the expressions in the *Revelations* are borrowed from this description, *Rev. xvii. 1—14. xviii. 2, 7, 8. xiv. 8.*

6. The prophet addresses the people of God, assuring them of the certainty of the events that he foretold. He calls them, *My threshing*, either as being smitten with God's word, or afflicted by his providences; and *the corn of my floor*, as dear and valuable to him, and carefully preserved, as the choicest wheat, when the chaff is winnowed away. *Note*; (1.) God's dearest children have frequently the sharpest trials; but it is only to purify and cleanse them. (2.) The church is God's floor, where the faithful, his corn, are collected; whilst all false professors and careless sinners are the chaff, which will be burnt with unquenchable fire. (3.) What ministers receive from God they must carefully and diligently deliver, keeping back from the people nothing of the whole counsel of God.

2dly,

## C H A P. XXII.

*The prophet lamenteth the invasion of Jewry by the Persians: he reproveth their human wisdom, and worldly joy: he prophesieth Shebna's deprivation, and Eliakim's substitution, prefiguring the kingdom of Christ.*

[Before Christ 714.]

**T**HE burden of the valley of vision, What aileth thee now, that thou art wholly

2dly, We have,

1. The burden of Dumah, which some suppose a part of Arabia, see Gen. xxv. 14. but more generally, and, I believe, justly, it is interpreted Idumæa. See the Notes. What temporal judgment it referred to is uncertain; probably they suffered with their neighbours from the Assyrian army.

2. A question put by one of mount Seir, *Watchman, what of the night? watchman, what of the night?* what hour, how much remains; or *what from the night?* what tidings? what danger? The question is repeated, as from a person eager to be resolved; or from several coming quickly after each other; so great is their anxiety, that a second calls before the watchman can answer the first. *Note;* (1.) Every minister is a watchman; he is to spread the alarm, and the people are to inquire at his mouth. (2.) It is a mercy when a sense of danger drives us to a solicitous inquiry how to escape. (3.) Every soul is by nature in darkness, till Christ, the Sun of righteousness, arises with healing in his wings.

3. *The watchman said, The morning cometh:* some respite from the calamity. Or, if we suppose the question put by a profelyte Idumæan, waiting for the consolation of Israel under the darkness of the Mosaic dispensation, the answer is, that the morning cometh, when Christ, the day-star, should arise, and light and joy be diffused by his gospel. But he adds, *and also the night;* their ruin by the army of the Assyrians. Or, taken more generally, it may imply a state of persecution succeeding the first propagation of the gospel; or a state of darkness in the church, when the prevalence of Mahometanism and Popery should almost utterly extinguish the light of truth. *If ye will inquire, inquire ye diligently and earnestly,* by prayer, meditation, reading God's word, and consulting his ministers, in order to *return and come* to him; either to God, by repentance, under the affliction; or to the watchman, for constant information and advice. *Note;* (1.) In the day of prosperity we must not forget to prepare for the night of adversity. (2.) If the morning of our life be lost in vanity, the night of age and death will surprise us unprepared for eternity. (3.) The soul that is inquiring after Christ, is already near to the dawning of the day. (4.) The gospel preaches free grace to all; whosoever will, let him come, and welcome, to Jesus Christ. (5.) Since our time is so short, it should quicken our diligence to improve it: we have no moment to spare.

3dly, Arabia lying in the way of the Assyrian army, it is probable that their detachments ravaged the country, or subdued it, as they advanced towards Judæa.

gone up to the house-tops?

2 Thou that art full of stirs, a tumultuous city, a joyous city: thy slain *men are* not slain with the sword, nor dead in battle.

3 All thy rulers are fled together, they are bound by the archers: all that are found in thee are bound together, *which* have fled from far.

1. The miserable case of the travelling companies of Dedanim is set forth (they were descendants of Abraham by Keturah). See the Notes. Terrified by the sword of the Assyrians, they fled to the forests to save themselves from the grievousness of war. They are called *travelling companies*, because their traffic was carried on by large caravans; or, alluding to their wandering life, in tents and with herds, without any settled abode. In their distress their friendly neighbours supplied them, fainting and famished, with bread and water; or, as the margin of our English Bibles reads it, they are commanded to do so, such kind compassion being ever due to the afflicted.

2. Kedar shares the same fate: all their glory, their riches, their flocks and herds plundered; and their mighty warriors, who stood to defend their country, diminished by the sword of the Assyrians, and few men left. So poor and uncertain a thing is this world's glory, so easily tarnished; and our abundance often proving our ruin, and exposing us to dangers that we otherwise might have escaped.

3. The time is fixed for their ruin: *within a year, according to the years of an hireling*, who precisely marks the day when his contract expires. And since Israel's God affirms it as sure, his people are warned not to rely on the Arabians as friends, or to fear them as foes.

## C H A P. XXII.

*Ver. 1. The burden of the valley of vision]* The seventh discourse of the second book, contained in this chapter, relates to the calamity of the people of Jerusalem, and to the fall of Shebna. Besides the inscription, it contains *first*, an account of the calamity and perturbation of the people of Jerusalem at the time of the irruption of their enemies upon Judæa; ver. 1—14. And *secondly*, the judgment upon Shebna; ver. 15—25. In the former part of the prophecy we have, *first*, a mystical delineation of the fatal calamity which should bring destruction upon the city under king Zedekiah, set forth under the figure of an exprobatory address directed to the people of Jerusalem, secure and exulting in the prosperity of the present times. *Secondly*, the calamity and fear of the approaching time, in which the Assyrians should invade and possess themselves of a great part of Judæa, which should be the forerunner, as it were, of a latter and more grievous calamity; ver. 6. to the middle of ver. 11. *Thirdly*, the crimes of the people, which provoked God's indignation against them; inconsideration, impenitence, and carnal security: ver. 11—14. Vitringa is of opinion, that Jerusalem is here called *the valley of vision*, because it was the seat of prophecy, the place where God revealed himself in prophetic visions; and

it

4 Therefore said I, Look away from me; I will weep bitterly, labour not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people.

5 For *it is* a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity by the Lord GOD of Hosts in the valley of vision, of breaking down the walls, and of crying to the mountains.

6 And Elam bare the quiver with chariots of men *and* horsemen, and Kir uncovered the shield.

7 And it shall come to pass, *that* thy choicest valleys shall be full of chariots, and the horsemen shall set themselves in array at the gate.

8 ¶ And he discovered the covering of

Judah, and thou didst look in that day to the armour of the house of the forest.

9 Ye have seen also the breaches of the city of David, that they are many: and ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool.

10 And ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall.

11 Ye made also a ditch between the two walls for the water of the old pool: but ye have not looked unto the maker thereof, neither had respect unto him that fashioned it long ago.

12 And in that day did the Lord GOD of Hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to

it might be called *the valley*, with respect to the hills where-with it is surrounded. He conjectures, that possibly there were schools of the prophets in that valley which was beneath the temple. The reader should observe, that as a two-fold calamity to come upon Jerusalem is foretold in this chapter; so the latter, and the more grievous, is placed first; and after it, that which in order should precede, and be as it were the forerunner of it. See a similar example, chap. xiv. 28, &c.

*Ver. 1—3. What aileth thee now, &c.]* The former part of this discourse sets forth the distress of Jerusalem from the Chaldees and Assyrians; and in these verses we have, *first*, the fate of the city; the commotion and perturbation thereof upon the report of the hostile army approaching to besiege it, and the sad circumstances of that calamity, and of that time. Vitringa thinks that the beginning of the second verse should be connected with the first, and thus read and understood; *What aileth thee now, that thou art all of thee gone up to the house-tops,—Thou city, full of acclamations, tumultuous, exulting?* “Whence comes it, that thou, “who wast lately full of joy and exultation, now in terror and silence ascendest the house-tops, either to reconnoitre the approaching enemy, or to consult for thine own safety?” The prophet by this mode of address means severely to rebuke the people. He goes on to relate four circumstances of this time; the *first* is, That the city, before it should be taken by the Chaldeans, should lose numbers of its people by a severe famine. *Thy deceased men are not pierced through with the sword, nor dead in battle.* See Sam. iv. 9. The *second* is, that it should be deserted by the rulers and chief men; *All thy rulers are fled together*; which was the case. See Jer. xxxix. 3, 4. The *third* is, that these rulers, thus flying away, should be taken and bound by the enemy. See 2 Kings xxv. 6, 7. Jer. xxxix. 6. Lam. iv. 19. The *fourth* circumstance is, that the people who remained in Jerusalem after the flight of the rulers, but especially the soldiers who were set over the defence of the lower city, should also be bound. See 2 Chron. xxxii. 4, 5, &c. 2 Kings, xxv. 11. Jer. xl. 1. and Vitringa.

*Ver. 4—5. Therefore said I, Look away]* Behold the prophet here anticipating those lamentations which he was afterwards to pour forth, and which Jeremiah afterwards so pa-

thetically poured forth, an eye-witness of this calamity. See his Lamentations. The expressions here are too strong to be applied to any other calamity than that great one, when the Jews were carried to Babylon. Who does not see, says Vitringa, in Isaiah thus weeping over Jerusalem, a type of Jesus weeping over the same city in its last extremity? See Luke xix. 41.

*Ver. 6, 7. And Elam, &c.]* *And Elam beareth the quiver; with chariots cometh the Syrian, and with horsemen; and Kir uncovereth the shield.* Lowth. The second member of the first part of this prophecy begins here, setting forth the Assyrian calamity, which was the forerunner of the greater one described in the former verses: And the first distress here foretold is, that the Assyrians, Medes, and Elamites should enter into Judæa in great multitudes, and possess the valleys near to Jerusalem. See on ch. xxi. 2. and xv. 1. There is no doubt that the Medes and Elamites were united with the Assyrians in the time of Sennacherib, but not in that of Nebuchadnezzar; so that this prophecy must certainly refer to the former.

*Ver. 8. And he discovered, &c.]* *And the barrier of Judah shall be laid open.* Lowth. This might be rendered, “And he shall dismantle the fortified cities of Judah.” The meaning of the metaphor is, that the fortified cities covered Judæa as with a veil. What the prophet here expresses figuratively, is expressed literally in the history, ch. xxxvi. 1. and 2 Chron. xxxii. 1.

*Ver. 8—11. And thou didst look in that day, &c.]* Or, *And thou shalt look, &c.* The verbs may be rendered throughout in the future. The third member of the former part contains the causes of these judgments; namely, the crimes and vices of the people; and, in these verses, their inconsideration and want of faith. This passage is best explained by the history, 2 Chron. xxxii. 2, &c. Whence we learn, that the prince and the people were rather solicitous to seek for human defence by fortifying their city, than to have respect unto Him who was their king and defence. The *house of the forest* is that mentioned 1 Kings, vii. 2. where the armory was laid: see also 1 Kings, x. 17. and Neh. iii. 19.

*Ver. 12—14. And in that day did, &c.]* Or, *And in that day will, &c.* Another fault which the prophet imputes

baldness, and to girding with sackcloth :

13 And behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for, to-morrow we shall die.

14 And it was revealed in mine ears by the LORD of Hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord GOD of Hosts.

15 ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD of hosts, Go, get thee unto this treasurer, *even* unto Shebna, which *is* over the house, *and say*,

16 What hast thou here? and whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre here, *as* he that heweth him out a sepulchre on high, *and* that graveth an habitation for himself in a rock?

17 Behold, the LORD will carry thee away with a mighty captivity, and will surely cover thee.

18 He will surely violently turn and toss thee *like* a ball into a large country: there shalt

thou die, and there the chariots of thy glory *shall be* the shame of thy lord's house.

19 And I will drive thee from thy station, and from thy state shall he pull thee down.

20 ¶ And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah :

21 And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand, and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah.

22 And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.

23 And I will fasten him *as* a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house.

24 And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the

to the carnal Jews, is manifest and hardened epicurism, or carnal security, founded in impious and profane principles, by which, giving up the hopes of a better life, they indulged themselves in the voluptuous use of present good things; a wickedness which, as most offensive to him, God here denounces by his prophet that he will punish to the last degree. See ch. iii. 14. where the iniquity of the princes is spoken of, among whom it is likely from what follows that Shebna was remarkable.

*Ver. 15. Thus saith the Lord God of Hosts*] The other part of this discourse, which contains the judgment upon Shebna, the overseer of the palace, is so connected with the former, as plainly to shew that this man was the chief and most eminent among the profane nobles of that time, against whom the prophet declaims in the preceding period; who, having the first place in the state and palace after the king, had corrupted many, himself the head and chief of the profane and irreligious. This period contains, *first*, a command given to the prophet, concerning a judgment to be denounced on Shebna, in the name of the Lord, *ver. 15.* *Secondly*, the sum of that judicial denunciation, which is two-fold; convictive, and penal. *Convictive*, wherein the security and confidence conceived in his mind, concerning the stability of his fortune and estate, is very sharply rebuked, *ver. 16.* *Penal*, which sets forth the sentence passed against him, or the punishments determined by the divine judgment, and the confirmation of this sentence added as a clause to this penal denunciation. The punishments are, his being carried away from the land of Canaan into a distant country, and as is probable into Assyria, *ver. 17, 18.* A deprivation from his high state and dignity, *ver. 19.* and the substitution of Eliakim, his rival, in his place, with

the high authority and prosperity of his house, *ver. 20—24.* Then follows in the 25th verse the confirmation, and, as it were, recapitulation of the whole sentence. We know nothing certain concerning this Shebna; it is hardly probable that he was the same person with that mentioned 2 Kings, xviii. 18. And it has been thought by some, that he was not a native Jew, but a foreigner, and a man of low birth; which they would collect from the pride of his desire to ennoble himself by a splendid sepulchre, *ver. 16.*

*Ver. 17, 18. Behold, &c.*] Or, *Behold, the Lord will throw thee out hence with a mighty throw, &c. ver. 18.* He will toss and whirl thee, as if he were whirling a ball, &c. and there [shall be] thy glorious chariots, O thou shame of thy lord's house.

*Ver. 22. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder*] In the former verses the prophet declares the investiture of Eliakim with the office and dignities of Shebna, as well as the goodness of Eliakim's disposition. He here says metaphorically, *that the keys of the house of David shall be upon his shoulder*: i. e. the entire government and administration of the house: so the Chaldee paraphrast explains it. This has been often and justly applied to the Lord JESUS. See Rev. iii. 7. and Isaiah ix. 6.

*Ver. 23, 24. And I will fasten him as a nail*] See Ezra, ix. 8. The word *נַיִל* *nailed*, rendered a *nail*, signifies a *pole*, or post, fixed in the earth, in the middle of a tent, to support the top, which, being full of hooks, serves likewise to hang vessels, garments, and the like, upon. See Zech. x. 4. The meaning is, that God would confirm and establish Eliakim, as a *nail* or *pole* which remains fixed and immovable in the earth, and which, moreover, is useful for the support of those things which are hung upon it for the use and ornament



vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons.

25 In that day, saith the LORD of Hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place

be removed, and be cut down, and fall; and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off: for the LORD hath spoken it.

ment of the house. We may just observe, that while from the darkness of history respecting these persons, the literal completion of this prophecy is hard to be known; there seems no doubt that it has a spiritual reference to that true and faithful steward who is figured out by Eliakim, who is said to *have the key of the house of David, who openeth, and no man shutteth, and who shutteth, and no man openeth.* The meaning of the word *Eliakim* is, *The mighty God will cause to arise.* But for a fuller account of this matter we refer to Vitringa. Bishop Lowth reads the second member of the 24th verse, *The offspring of high and low degree.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The title of this prophecy is the burden of the valley of vision, alluding to the name of Jerusalem, which signifies the vision of peace; or because that was the place where God made known his will in visions to the prophets. It is called a valley, the hills surrounding it on every side; and the vision is a burden, a heavy calamity, though not utterly consuming, yet greatly terrifying them.

1. Their consternation at the approach of the Assyrian army is great; running to the tops of their houses, to see if any help was at hand, or to observe the approaches of the enemy; *full of stir* or *noises*, preparing to oppose their invaders; or *thou wast full of stir*, the streets crowded with people; *a tumultuous city*, populous and noisy with the din of trade, *a joyous city*, rich and revelling. But now the voice of mirth has ceased, the horrid sound of war is heard alone, and fear and consternation are spread abroad. Though the sword had not reached them, the famine was felt; or the fright they were put into sunk them spiritless, as if thrust through with a sword. Nor was this panic among the people only; their rulers increased it, flying from all the neighbouring cities to Jerusalem, without attempting to defend them, (see chap. xxxvi.) or many of Jerusalem, instead of encouraging the people, thought only how to secure themselves by flight: instead of preparing for a vigorous defence, they surrendered themselves to bonds, or were so disheartened, that they had not courage to make an arrow, as it may be rendered, *bound from the bow.* Note; The alarm of war is terrible: May we never, by our abuse of the blessings of peace, provoke God to bring the scourge upon us; for, if under his wrath, our fleets and armies could yield us small protection!

2 Great is the prophet's grief at the scene of desolation before him. He desires his friend not to attempt to comfort him, but to leave him to weep bitterly over the spoiling of the daughter of his people; and abundant cause there is for his tears, when trouble is on every side, the people as mire in the streets trodden down by the Assyrians, the walls of the fortified cities battered into dust, all the land full of distress and perplexity; and the Lord's correcting hand seen in the judgment adds bitterness to the affliction. Note; (1.) Every good man is a patriot, and when he can

do no more to save his country will weep over its ruins. (2.) Whatever we feel of afflictions from man, we must look farther to the hand of God who sends or permits them.

3. The vast hosts, composed of different nations, Persians, and Medes, which were in Sennacherib's army, fill the country with chariots and horsemen, and prepare for the siege of Jerusalem: they make ready their shields, and place their advanced guard, to intercept any going in, or coming out of the gates of the city. How melancholy a change, to see those valleys, once so thick with corn, now yield an iron harvest of erected spears.

2dly, When recovered a little from their terrors, they began to think what was to be done. *He discovered the covering of Judah*; either Hezekiah opened his magazines, or God detected their hypocrisy in this time of danger, by the temper they discovered; or rather Sennacherib, having taken the surrounding fortresses which covered the city, came in full view of it, ready to begin the siege. Hereupon we are told,

1. The steps they took to put Jerusalem in a posture of defence. Their first concern was, to arm the people; for which purpose, the armoury of the house of the forest of Lebanon, built by Solomon, is opened; they next surveyed the fortifications, and set themselves to repair the breaches of the fortress, called the city of David, 2 Sam. v. 7. which in times of peace had been greatly neglected. To secure plenty of water, they collected together those of the lower pool; and, having raised an outer wall, drew the water out of the old pool into the ditch between the walls, to strengthen the place, as well as to distress the enemy for want of it. The houses are numbered, that each may furnish its quota of men, money, or provisions, for the use of the soldiery; and those in the suburbs, which might facilitate the approaches of the besiegers, or which were too near the wall within, so as to prevent an easy communication from one part to another, are demolished, and the materials applied to strengthen the wall. Note; (1.) In times of danger we must exert our utmost efforts, and trust God with the issue. (2.) Times of peace are often times of waste; because war seems distant, a provision against it is neglected, and that is a temptation to the enemy to attack us unprepared.

2. Amid their warlike preparations they neglected the God of war: they fortified the city, but forgot the Maker of it, without whom the watchman waketh in vain. Their king indeed looked up to him, 2 Kings xviii. 5. 2 Chron. xxxij. 8. but his irreligious courtiers, with Shebna at their head, seemed to have no thought of divine assistance, and trusted only to the arm of flesh. Note; Though kings may make religion fashionable by espousing the profession of it, it is not in their power to convert the heart. A greater king than they must work, or their courtiers, though complaisantly submissive, will be mere outward conformists, not internal converts.

4 D 2

3. Their

## C H A P. XXIII.

*The miserable overthrow of Tyre. Her restoration after seventy years, and her iniquities.*

[Before Christ 715.]

**T**HE burden of Tyre. Howl, ye ships of Tarshish; for it is laid waste, so that

there is no house, no entering in: from the land of Chittim it is revealed to them.

2 Be still, ye inhabitants of the isle; thou whom the merchants of Zidon, that pass over the sea, have replenished.

3 And by great waters the seed of Sihor,

3. Their unhumbed temper under this visitation is remarked to their shame. God called to weeping and mourning, &c. the expressive signs of true penitential sorrow; to produce which, was the great end of their affliction; and his prophets seconded the providence with their preaching; but vain was the call. Having, as they thought, secured the city, they set danger at defiance, and mirth, jollity, and riot reigned; they treated the prophetic warnings with contempt; and since the prophet urged their danger, and death at their door, as an argument to humble their souls in sorrow for their sins before God, they, with infidel disregard, made it a plea for their impiety, *let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die*; if it be a short life, let it be a merry one; and, disbelieving the doctrine of a future state, appeared fearless of the consequences of their sins, 1 Cor. xv. 32. *Note*; (1.) A life of pleasure naturally leads to a state of infidelity. (2.) They who risk eternity on the miserable hope that at death their being is at an end, will find too late their dreadful delusion.

4. God, in displeasure against such impiety, denounces his wrath on these proud mockers. They contemned the prophet's warning, but they shall feel the wrath which they despised.

3dly, We have a prophecy of a domestic occurrence in the household of Hezekiah, which foretells the disgrace of Shebna, and the advancement of Eliakim. What was Shebna's particular crime, which occasioned his being degraded, does not appear: the Jews say he was a traitor, and had agreed to give up the city to the Assyrians; but, being disappointed in the attempt, was carried away captive by them, and severely used for deceiving them.

1. His fall is declared to him by Isaiah. Though a great man, and high in office, both treasurer and steward of the household, he is not too great to be faithfully admonished. *What hast thou here?* what estate, or what business? being, it is supposed, a foreigner promoted by Ahaz, and continued in office by Hezekiah, to whose reformation he conformed; and *whom hast thou here?* or what friends to prevent thy ruin, or what family, *that thou hast heaved thee out a sepulchre?* a habitation in a rock, with a stately monument erected over it, where his remains might be deposited with pomp: vain preparations, when doomed to captivity, sudden and terrible, and covered as a criminal led to execution! Tossed to and fro as a ball in a strange land, he should lead a wearisome life, and lie there, destitute of all his former splendor, a shame to his master's house, to Ahaz, who promoted him. Suspected, probably before, and now degraded by Hezekiah, he shall fall from his high station, in which he seemed fixed as a nail in a sure place; and all his dependants and followers, as is the case when favourites are disgraced, sink with him. *Note*; (1.) High places are slippery; they who seem most firmly

fixed, are often nearest the precipice of ruin. (2.) Pride looks even to the tomb, and the lying monument is taught to flatter, when the corpse is turning to putrefaction. (3.) A faithful minister of God must not fear to deliver his message boldly to the greatest, however offensive it may appear.

2. Eliakim's advancement is foretold; a faithful servant of God, promoted at the prophet's instigation, who inclined Hezekiah to put so worthy a man in Shebna's stead; and it would be a deep mortification to the disgraced minister, to see the ensigns of office that he wore now transferred to another; the robe, the girdle, and the key. A worthy magistrate would he prove, a father to the people, strengthened of God to discharge the trust reposed in him, having the entire management of affairs committed to him, fixed in his office, and, through God's blessing, an honour to his family. *Note*; (1.) When preferment comes, not hunted down by solicitation in the way of pride and covetousness, but unsought for from the hand of Providence, and conferred as the wages of desert, then it is truly honourable. (2.) When God calls us into office, we may expect from him strength to discharge it. (3.) They who would rule well, must regard their subjects as children, display parental affection with authority, and shew that the great end of all they do is the public good: and then *Pater patriæ*, the father of their country, will be their most honourable title. (4.) The higher the office, the heavier the burden; and the greater diligence, fidelity, and zeal are required to discharge it. (5.) Eliakim was herein the type of the Lord Jesus, the servant of God, emphatically so called, *chap. xlii.* 1. appointed by his Father to the office of Ruler in his church, and upheld by him in the discharge of his arduous undertaking, invested with the ensigns of royalty, and possessed of all power; having the keys of wisdom and grace to unlock the treasures of his word; the keys of heaven, to open the kingdom to all believers; and of death and hell, which he shuts, and none can open; he opens, and none shut. His government is fixed and established for ever; he is the brightness of his Father's glory; his people's happiness and honour are derived from him; and, careful of the interest of his faithful subjects, from the least to the greatest they receive out of his fulness.

## C H A P. XXIII.

*Ver. 1. The burden of Tyre*] There can be no wonder that the prophet, foretelling the judgments of the different nations concerned with the Jews, should dwell upon that of Tyre. In this chapter, which contains the 8th and last discourse of the second book of his prophecies, Isaiah paints, in a most lively manner, the calamity which should happen to Tyre, in a discourse consisting of various apostrophes, directed either to the Tyrians themselves or

to

the harvest of the river, *is* her revenue; and she is a mart of nations.

4 Be thou ashamed, O Zidon: for the sea hath spoken, *even* the strength of the sea, saying, I travail not, nor bring forth children,

neither do I nourish up young men, *nor* bring up virgins.

5 As at the report concerning Egypt, *so* shall they be forely pained at the report of Tyre.

to the inhabitants of Gades in Farther Spain, or to the islands of the Mediterranean sea; and also to the Sidonians and Egyptians, who, together with the insular inhabitants of Greece and Italy, should both admire and bewail the overthrow of Tyre. In the prosecution hereof he compares this calamity of the Tyrians to their abundance, riches, luxury, and most flourishing state, which drew upon them at that time the eyes of all nations, thus greatly exaggerating their calamity. Soon after he sets forth the causes of this strange event; the *Supreme One*, the God of Israel, against whom their Hercules was unable to defend the Tyrians; and the *instrumental* causes, the Chaldeans, who, though at that time they had no empire in the world, were yet to be called forth by the Supreme God to execute his judgments. See ver. 13. But as God, according to his exquisite goodness to mankind, usually tempers his justice and severity with clemency and with grace, and had accordingly determined to call in his good time the Gentiles to the participation of all the blessings of the Gospel, the prophet teaches that this first calamity of the Tyrians should be concluded in 70 years, after which time their nation should flourish in its former manner; and, what seemed beyond all expectation, the Tyrians should receive the kingdom of God, should consecrate their wealth to him, and become converts to the true religion. This is the sum of the present illustrious prophecy; the scene whereof is to be fixed at that time when the Chaldeans, under Nebuchadnezzar, besieged Tyre, which is presented as so besieged in vision to the eyes of the prophet, in all its pomp and glory. The prophecy, besides the inscription, contains two parts; *first*, the judicial sentence of God upon Tyre, ver. 1—14. and *secondly*, the alleviation of that sentence, ver. 15—18. The sentence is again two-fold; the first part sets forth the judgment of Tyre, ver. 1—7. the other the causes of that judgment. The former part declares the judgment or calamity of Tyre figuratively, by apostrophes; the *first* of which is directed to the Tyrian mariners, ver. 1.; the *second* to those insolent people with whom the Tyrians traded, or to the Tyrian merchants and traders, ver. 2. 3.; the *third* to Sidon, ver. 4, 5.; the *fourth* to Tyre itself, ver. 6, 7. The latter part of the first section, which sets forth the causes of the judgment, declares the principal cause to be the *God of Israel* (as the punisher of sin, the origin of all evil). Jehovah, therefore, had determined this calamity upon Tyre; and the prophet denounces it, with a new apostrophe, to the Tyrians, ver. 8—12. The instrumental causes he declares to be the *Chaldeans*; with a last apostrophe, to the Tyrian sailors, ver. 13, 14. The latter section, which contains the alleviation of the divine judgment, plainly manifests that this calamity of Tyre should be concluded within 70 years, after which it should flourish again; ver. 15—17. and reveals the gracious de-

sign of God to call the Tyrians to the communion of his visible church, ver. 18. It has been questioned, which of the Tyres was the subject of the prophecies of Isaiah and Ezekiel. The truest and best answer is, that they pertain to both; some expressions being applicable only to the former, and others only to the latter. But it should be observed, that both Tyres are comprehended under the same name, and both spoken of as one city; part being built on the continent, and part on an island adjoining. *Tarshish* was Tartessus in Spain; *Cbittim* signifies the isles and countries bordering upon the Mediterranean. The plain meaning of this apostrophe, directed to the ships, that is to say, to the mariners of Tarshish, whose gain proceeded principally from Tyre, is, "Lament and deplore the mournful fall of this city, which you shall hear of while you are trafficking in the most distant ports of the Mediterranean sea." Instead of, *so that there is no house, no entering-in*, Vitringa reads, *both within and without*. See Bishop Newton, Vitringa, and, for more concerning Tyre, the Univ. Hist. vol. ii. p. 322.

*Ver. 2, 3. Be still, &c.]* The second apostrophe is addressed to the islands of the Mediterranean sea, which are here collectively called *the isle*, and which are summoned to silence and wonder. That this is the true interpretation appears from Ezek. xxvi. 16, 17, 18. The order of the apostrophes is observable. The *first* is directed to the sailors of Tarshish, the inhabitants of the Farthest Spain, the most remote of all; the *second* to the islands of the Mediterranean sea, which were nearer to Tyre; the *third* to the Sidonians, who were allied to the Tyrians; and the *fourth* to Tyre itself. That the Tyrians are called, ver. 6, *the inhabitants of the isle*, can be no objection to this interpretation, as they had this attribute in common with other insular people: (The *merchants of Sidon*, comprehend those of Tyre also) accordingly the 2d verse may be rendered, *Be dumb, ye inhabitants of the isle, thou whom the Sidonian, or, Tyrian merchants, passing over the sea, replenished*. The cause is subjoined in the next verse; the meaning whereof is, that the merchandises of Egypt and Arabia, which were esteemed the most excellent, as also of other nations, were carried to Tyre and Sidon, and by their care and industry conveyed to the inhabitants of the islands in the Mediterranean sea. By *Sibor*, which is its proper name, and *the river*, is meant the Nile. See Jer. ii. 18. The 3d verse might be rendered, *And whose produce, namely, Sidon's, was by great waters, the seed of Sibor, the harvest of the river of Egypt; and who became the mart of nations*. The phrase is metaphorical, and is taken from the produce of well-cultivated lands. See Ezek. xxvii. 12, &c. Bishop Newton and Vitringa.

*Ver. 4. Be thou ashamed, O Zidon]* The calamity of Tyre would more nearly affect Sidon as its mother and nurse, who had always cherished and supported her as a daughter;

6 Pass ye over to Tarshish; howl, ye inhabitants of the isle.

7 Is this your joyous city, whose antiquity is of ancient days? her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn.

8 Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning city, whose merchants are

princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth?

9 The LORD of Hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth?

10 Pass through thy land as a river, O daughter of Tarshish: there is no more strength.

*daughter*, and placed her greatest confidence in this fortress, which she now saw taken, with *shame* and *concern*; wherefore, either Tyre herself is here introduced as deploring her desolation, that she might excite a sense of shame in Sidon; or Sidon is introduced bitterly lamenting her desolation, and setting forth the reason of her shame, since in the destruction of Tyre she would be thought *desolate* and *barran*. For though she had brought up *more sons* and *daughters*, that is, though the Sidonians had planted more colonies in various parts of the world; yet as Tyre was her first-born *daughter*, the most celebrated, opulent, and as it were a part of herself, even another Sidon, this being destroyed, she would not be thought to have brought forth any children, and deplores her widowhood with bitter tears. The greatness of this grief which the Sidonians as well as other nations should feel upon the fall of Tyre, is defended in the fifth verse, since it should be not less than if men should hear of the total fall of Egypt, the most flourishing of all countries: *as a report concerning Egypt would pain the mind; so shall men be sorely pained at the report of Tyre*. This is Vitringa's sense of the passage; while others think that the address is made from Tyre to Sidon; as much as to say, "Be ashamed, O Sidon; thou who art a maritime city, populous, well fortified, and whose strength is in the sea, as well as that of Tyre; and who, on this account, promisest to thyself security and prosperity; now behold Tyre, sprung from thee, and equal to thee, *the strength of the sea*, who is so reduced as to be equally solitary with her who never had any children; all her inhabitants being cut off and destroyed by famine or by war."

*Ver. 6, 7. Pass ye over to Tarshish*] The prophet now turns his discourse to Tyre itself; and commands or exhorts such of the inhabitants, not of insular Tyre only, but of the whole maritime coast subject to the dominion of Tyre, as should remain from this overthrow, to go to *Tartessus* or *Gades*, that there they might deplore the fate of their city, and mutually lament its destruction with those who would feel their grief, as deriving their original from the same city. Whenever the prophets denounce the downfall of a city or kingdom, they usually describe, by way of contrast, its present flourishing condition, to shew, in a stronger point of view, how Providence shifteth the scene, and ordereth all events. The prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel observe the same method with regard to Tyre. Isaiah speaks of it here as a place of great antiquity: *Is this your triumphant city, whose antiquity is of the earliest date?* and it is mentioned as a strong place as early as in the days of Joshua: Josh. xix. 29. Strabo mentions it as, next to Sidon, the greatest and most ancient city of the Phœnicians. Quintus Curtius says, it is a city remarkable

to posterity, both for the antiquity of its origin, and for its frequent change of fortune. The ironical expression of the prophet, *Is this your triumphant city, &c.?* implies that the Tyrians were apt to boast of their antiquity; and from Herodotus's account it appears that they did so. Sanchoniathon, the Phœnician historian, who is reckoned to have lived about the time of Gideon, has mentioned in his *Fragments* that part of Tyre which stood upon the continent. Vitringa renders the last clause of the seventh verse, *Whose feet have carried her afar off to sojourn*; which he thinks to be strongly descriptive, not only of the Tyrian navigations into distant countries, but also of the variety of colonies which they were so remarkable for planting.

*Ver. 8—10. Who hath taken this counsel, &c.*] The prophet here informs us of the great executor of this judgment, namely, God himself. To do this the more elegantly, he introduces a chorus of men, astonished at this unexpected fate of so glorious a city, and inquiring into the author and causes of it; to which the prophet replies, not only declaring the efficient, but also the final cause of this great and strange event: subjoining afterwards, ver. 10. an apostrophe to the Tyrians themselves, expressive of the greatness of their calamity. The reader will observe a fine gradation both in the question and the answer. This counsel is taken not only against Tyre, a fortified city, founded on a rock, and defended by the sea, but against Tyre the *crowning city*, the city which as it were wore a crown among the rest; the *royal Tyre*, as an ancient writer calls it; excelling in power and glory: *whose merchants were princes*. Tyre was the most celebrated place in the world for its trade and navigation; the seat of commerce, and the centre of riches; and therefore it is called *the mart of nations*; ver. 6. Ezekiel, commenting upon these words, (chap. 27.) recounts the various nations whose commodities were brought to Tyre, and bought and sold by the Tyrians. It was in this wealthy and flourishing condition when the prophets foretold its destruction; particularly Isaiah, even 125 years at least before it was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. The prophet in his reply shews that the counsel was taken by one well equal to the task; the Lord of Hosts: and the reasons which moved him to this counsel, he tells us, were, the pride of this people, and their consequent vices: so Ezekiel censures the pride of the king of Tyre, in arrogating to himself divine honours. He then adds an apostrophe to Tyre; *Pass, O Tyre, through thy land*; that is to say, as well through Tyre itself as the country subject to it, heretofore excellently fortified, and every way properly defended: and now, behold the same nation, *without a girdle*; i. e. every where loosed, dissolved, and broken; and pass it like a river, plain, and level with the ground, without fortifications,

11 He stretched out his hand over the sea, he shook the kingdoms: the LORD hath given a commandment against the merchant city, to destroy the strong holds thereof.

12 And he said, Thou shalt no more rejoice, O thou oppressed virgin, daughter of Zidon: arise, pass over to Chittim; there also shalt thou have no rest.

13 Behold the land of the Chaldeans; this people was not, till the Assyrian founded it for them that dwell in the wilderness: they set up the towers thereof, they raised up the palaces thereof; and he brought it to ruin.

14 Howl, ye ships of Tarshish: for your strength is laid waste.

cations, or any mode of defence: for, as a river flowing gently along, as a plain superficies, in which there is nothing to stop your course, if you pass over it in a boat; so your land, plundered and laid desolate by the enemy, its fortifications levelled with the ground, will supply you with a plain and even superficies, that you may pass over it like a river, without any opposition; for there is no girdle, no strength or fortrefs, remaining. The prophet here elegantly calls Tyre the daughter of Tarshish or Tartessus, because, though heretofore the people thereof were indebted to Tyre, yet upon the destruction of this city, Tartessus, Gades, or Carthage, should be looked upon as the metropolis of the Tyrian nation. Tartessus should henceforth be considered as another Tyre. *All the honourable of the earth*, at the end of the 9th verse, would more properly be rendered, *All the honourable of the land*. See Vitringa; who reads the 10th verse, *Pass over thy land as over a river, O daughter of Tarshish: there is no binding any more*.

Ver. 11, 12. *He stretched out his hand*] We have here the latter member of the period concerning the grand projector and executor of the destruction of Tyre; where, in the 11th verse, the prophet tells us that the God of Israel hath stretched out his hand, hath exerted his power and strength to execute his judgments against Phœnicia, the sea or maritime coast of Syria; the effect of which was the destruction of many kingdoms, and among the rest that of Tyre in particular, by the hand of one to whom he has given commandment for that purpose. See chap. v. 25. He therefore addresses the Tyrians, ver. 12. who, upon this threatening calamity, should be desirous to consult for their own safety, and avoid the oppressions and distresses of their country; exhorting them to speed their flight into Italy, Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, to which they frequently sailed, though he by no means assures them of rest even there. Justin expressly informs us, that the Sidonians being besieged, and expelled their city, by the king of Ascalon, went in ships and built Tyre: thus, ancient as this city was, it was the daughter of Sidon; which verifies what the prophet observes, ver. 2. that the merchants of Sidon, who pass over the sea, replenished her. It is well known, that the Phœnicians were the best navigators of antiquity, and sent forth colonies into several parts of the world; and of all these the Tyrians were the most celebrated for their shipping and colonies; in which respect Tyre exceeded Sidon; sending forth colonies into Africa and Spain, and beyond the Pillars of Hercules. The Tyrians, therefore, having planted colonies at Tarshish, and on the coasts of Chittim, it was natural for them, when they were pressed with dangers and difficulties at home, to

fly to their friends and countrymen for refuge and protection; and that they really did so we learn from St. Jerome, upon the authority of Assyrian histories, which are now lost. But though the Tyrians were to pass over to Tarshish, and to Chittim, yet even there they were to find no rest, no quiet settlement. After Nebuchadnezzar had succeeded in Tyre and Egypt, we may suppose he carried his arms farther westward; and if, as history informs us, he proceeded as far as to all those places whither the Tyrians had sent forth colonies, this people might well be said to have no rest, their conqueror pursuing them from one country to another. Besides and after this, the Carthaginians and other colonies of the Tyrians lived in a very unsettled state: their history is made up of little but wars and tumults, even before their three fatal wars with the Romans, in every one of which their affairs grew worse and worse. Sicily and Spain, Europe and Africa, the land and their own element, were theatres of their calamities, till not only the new, but the old Carthage likewise, was destroyed. Thus as the Carthaginians sprung from the Tyrians, and the Tyrians from the Sidonians, and Sidon was the first-born of Canaan; Gen. x. 15. the curse upon Canaan seems to have pursued them to the most distant parts of the earth. See Bishop Newton as above, and Vitringa.

Ver. 13, 14. *Behold the land of the Chaldeans, &c.*] The prophet in these words sets forth the instrumental cause of the destruction of Tyre, which should subserve the God of Israel in the execution of this singular judgment; and, as this was a very striking and extraordinary matter, he introduces it with a *Behold*. At the delivery of this prophesy the Chaldeans were an inconsiderable people: *This people was not*, says the prophet, of any note or eminence, till the Assyrian founded it for them that dwell in the wilderness; they dwelt before in tents, and led a wandering life in the wilderness, till the Assyrians built Babylon for their reception; they set up the towers thereof, they raised the palaces thereof. Herodotus, Ctesias, and other ancient historians, agree that the kings of Assyria fortified and beautified Babylon; and he, that is, this people,—the Chaldeans and Babylonians, brought it to ruin; that is, Tyre, which is the subject of the whole prophesy. The Assyrians were at that time the great monarchs of the east; the Chaldeans were their subjects and slaves; and therefore it is the more extraordinary that the prophet should so many years before-hand foresee the successes and conquests of the Chaldeans. The verse may be rendered thus; *Behold, the land of the Chaldeans. (This people was of no account: the Assyrian founded it for them that inhabit deserts; they set up its towers, they raised its palaces;) that land*

15 ¶ And it shall come to pass in that day, that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king: after the end of seventy years shall Tyre sing as an harlot.

16 Take an harp, go about the city, thou harlot that hast been forgotten; make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be

remembered.

17 And it shall come to pass, after the end of seventy years, that the LORD will visit Tyre, and she shall turn to her hire, and shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth.

18 And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the LORD: it shall not be

*land bringeth her [Tyre] to ruin.* He subjoins an apostrophe, not, as before, to the Tyrian merchants and principal inhabitants, but to the mariners, who are called to *howling* for the fall of that city, whence alone they derived their strength and fortune. See Rev. xviii. 17. and Vitringa.

*Ver. 15—17.* And it shall come to pass in that day] The second part of this discourse contains the alleviation of the calamity decreed upon Tyre. In these verses the prophet informs us, *first*, that God would circumscribe within certain bounds his severity to Tyre, and within seventy years restore it to its former state; and then, *secondly*, in the 18th verse, foretels, that in process of time the Tyrians would be converted to the true religion. The former particular is related, *first* literally, and then figuratively. *According to the days of one king or kingdom*, means the Babylonian monarchy, which was to continue seventy years. Tyre is represented under the image of a harlot; and thence these figures are borrowed: the plain meaning of the verse is, that she should lie neglected of traders and merchants for seventy years, as long as the Babylonish empire lasted, and after that should recover her liberties and her trade, and draw in several of all nations to deal with her; and particularly the *kings of the earth* to buy her purples, which were worn chiefly by emperors and kings, and for which Tyre was famous above all places in the world. *Seventy years* was the time prefixed for the duration of the Babylonian empire. So long the nations were to groan under that tyrannical yoke: accordingly at the end of that period, Cyrus and the Persians subverted that empire, and restored the conquered nations to their liberties. These seventy years may likewise be computed in this manner: Tyre was taken by Nebuchadnezzar in the 32d year of his reign, and in the year before Christ 573. *Seventy years* from that time, will bring it down to the year before Christ 503, and the 19th of Darius Hystaspis. At that period, as appears from history, the Ionians had rebelled against Darius, and the Phœnicians assisted him with their fleet; and consequently it is reasonable to conclude that they were now restored to their former privileges. In the succeeding reign we find that they, together with the Sidonians, furnished Xerxes with several ships for his expedition into Greece; and by the time of Alexander, the Tyrians were grown to such power and greatness, that they stopped the progress of that rapid conqueror longer than any part of the Persian empire besides. All this, however, is to be understood of the insular Tyre; for as the old city flourished most before the time

of Nebuchadnezzar, so the new flourished most afterwards; and this is the Tyre which henceforth is so much celebrated in history. Bishop Newton and Vitringa.

*Ver. 18.* And her merchandise, &c. The meaning of the prophet is extremely clear; namely, that the time would come after the restoration of Tyre, in which the Tyrians, out of reverence to the true God, would consecrate their wealth and gain to him, and would readily contribute that gain and wealth to the use and support of the teachers of true religion: in short, that the Tyrians would become converts to that religion. The reader will easily observe that the passage is metaphorical, and that consequently no reasonable objections can be urged against it. See Zech. ix. 1—8. Psal. xlv. 12. and lxxii. 10. The Tyrians were much addicted to the worship of *Hercules*, as he was called by the Greeks, or of *Baal*, as he is denominated in Scripture; but in process of time, by the means of some Jews and proselytes living and conversing with them, some of them also became proselytes to the Jewish religion; so that we find a *great multitude of people from the sea-coasts of Tyre and Sidon came to hear our Saviour*; and he, though peculiarly sent to the *lost sheep of the house of Israel*, yet came into the *coasts of Tyre and Sidon*; and the first-fruits of the Gospel there was a Tyrian woman, a woman of Canaan as she is called, a *Syro-phœnician by nation*, Luke vi. 17. Matth. xv. 21. Mark vii. 24. When St. Paul, in his way to Jerusalem, came to Tyre, he found disciples there who were inspired by the Holy Ghost, and prophesied; and with them he *tarried seven days*, Acts xxi. 4. In the time of Dioclesian's persecution, the Tyrians were such sincere converts to Christianity, that they exhibited several glorious examples of confessors and martyrs; and when the storm of persecution was blown over, under their Bishop Paulinus, they built an oratory, or rather a temple, for the public worship of God, the most magnificent and sumptuous (to an extreme) in all Palestine and Phœnicia. To these particulars we will only add, that Tyre was erected into an archbishopric, and the first under the patriarchate of Jerusalem having fourteen bishops under its primacy; and in this state it continued several years. See Bishop Newton's Dissertations. Vitringa has shewn at large, that this prophecy concerning Tyre has a further and mystical reference to papal Rome, of which St. John speaks in the very words of this prophet; *Thy merchants were the great men of the earth*, Rev. xviii. 23. And he has been at great pains to shew how exactly the remarkable attributes of Tyre, in a mystical sense, belong to the corrupt Romish church. See Rev. xiii. throughout.

treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the LORD, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Tyre was a city in Phœnicia, of great antiquity, and the grand mart of trade for all the commodities of the east and west. It stood on an island, about half a mile from the sea, strongly fortified by art and nature, and deemed impregnable: but when God hath a controversy with any people, their strength is weakness. We have here,

1. Her prosperity. She was a mart of nations, enriched by the traffic of all people, whose merchants resorted thither, peopled at first by a colony from Sidon or Zidon, a few leagues distant from Tyre, and therefore called her daughter, though soon eclipsing her mother city. Thither the products of Egypt were carried, and her revenue increased with the harvest, which the river Sihor, or Nile, by overflowing, produced. A city, full of wealth, and, as the sad effect of it, grown proud and haughty. A joyous city, where pleasure as well as business abounded; and sitting as a queen on the seas, her seat of empire, seemed established for ever; her citizens, great as princes, and her merchants among the honourable of the earth.

2. Her fall by Nebuchadnezzar, after a siege of thirteen years. When the city could hold out no longer, the inhabitants stripped the place of every thing valuable, and failed away, leaving little but empty houses, and a naked rock. The ships of Tarshish or Tartessus, and more generally the ships of the sea of all nations, are called upon to howl over her desolations; no house being left standing by the conqueror, nor is there any more entering into the port, her commerce being utterly ruined. *From the land of Chittim it is revealed to them*, the Tyrians are informed of the preparations made against them by the Babylonians; or there is *no entering in from the land of Chittim*, the merchants of Greece and Italy can no longer carry on their trade thither: *it is revealed to them that Tyre is destroyed*. In mournful silence the inhabitants would sit astonished at their overthrow, and Zidon her neighbour, and nearly connected with her, be ashamed, having placed such confidence in Tyre that it could not be taken; but the waves of the sea carry the tidings, and this proud city, late *the strength of the sea*, so fortified and strengthened by it, bemoans her desolations; no longer full of inhabitants, and sending out her colonies to distant parts, but now a widow, bereaved of her children. Not Egypt's fall, though so potent a kingdom, would spread a greater terror, or, as the words may be read, *when the report cometh to the Egyptians, they will be in pain at the report of Tyre*, trembling for themselves when this bulwark between them and the Chaldeans is fallen. Hastening now to forsake the place, the inhabitants are enjoined to embark for Tarshish, and *her own feet shall carry her away*; those that should be seized by the conqueror, would be led into captivity; or this may signify her ships, whose oars and mariners would serve her instead of feet to escape. Swift as a river, the merchants of Tarshish, who were at Tyre, or the people so called, are urged to hasten away; because the place is no longer defensible, and is ready to fall. Thus for a season her joy should be silenced. *The oppressed virgin, the daughter of Zidon*, that had never been conquered before, must pass over to the isles of Chittim, Greece, or

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Italy; or to the islands of Corfica, Sardinia, and Sicily, where colonies of the Tyrians were planted; and yet even there *thou shalt have no rest*, these countries being doomed to fall under the yoke of their enemies. *Note*; (1.) When God pursues, there is no flying from our misery. (2.) They who think themselves most secure, feel the heavier anguish in their falls.

3. If it be asked, who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the answer is, one that is fully able to execute his designs, the Lord of Hosts, who would abase their pride, and stain all human glory; that others, warned by their fall, might be admonished of the vanity of every temporal possession, and the folly of being proud, and trusting on that which can profit so little in the day of wrath. As he did of old, when Egypt was smitten under his mighty hand, so hath he now given commandment to the destroyer, and is pleased to use the Chaldean sword. *Though this people was not of note and figure till the Assyrian founded it for them that dwell in the wilderness*, who drove out the original inhabitants of Mesopotamia, and translated thither the Chaldeans, who before dwelt scattered in the wilderness; *they set up the towers thereof, they raised up the palaces of Babylon*, greatly augmenting and fortifying it; *he brought it, or he shall bring it, to ruin*; these Chaldeans shall be instruments to execute the divine judgments.

2dly, The desolations of Tyre are not designed to be perpetual.

1. Seventy years are appointed for the term of her captivity, as of the Jews, during the days of *one king*, or kingdom; for so long Nebuchadnezzar and his family reigned before Babylon was taken: and on the conquest Cyrus made, these, among other captive nations, were permitted to resettle in their own country.

2. On their return, Tyre is represented under the character of a harlot, returning from confinement, or recovering from sickness, when all her paramours had forsaken her; and resuming all her former arts to recover her trade, and to engage the return of her merchants, as a harlot, with the harp, by her voice and music seeks to draw in her lovers, and enrich herself by the wages of her fornication: and so far she would succeed, as to become again a general mart, and to increase her wealth, as in her former days of prosperity. *Note*; (1.) This world's wealth carries a harlot's smiles, and too often seduces the heart into spiritual fornication. (2.) Though our case be reduced never so low, we need not despair: when God will turn our captivity, he can bring back our lost prosperity.

3. A better state than that of her worldly prosperity closes the prophecy. In the days of the Messiah her gains should be employed in the service of his kingdom, to support the preachers of his Gospel, and be consecrated to his glory; which was fulfilled, Acts, xxi. 3. when we find Christianity planted there; and, according to the custom of the primitive church, no doubt, the inhabitants being rich contributed liberally to the necessities of the faints. *Note*; (1.) If God give abundance, it becomes then a blessing indeed, when we have, through his grace, a desire to employ it to his glory. (2.) The ministers of the

4 E

sanctuary

## C H A P. XXIV.

*The doleful judgments of God upon the land. A remnant will joyfully praise him. God in his judgments shall advance his kingdom.*

[Before Christ 715.]

**B**EHOLD, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof.

2 And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller;

as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him.

3 The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the LORD hath spoken this word.

4 The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth, and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish.

5 The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant:

sanctuary have a just claim to a liberal maintenance, and they who honour the master they serve will be happy to support his ministers for his sake. (3.) They who devote themselves to God's work, must desire no great things in this world; if they have sufficient bread, and durable clothing, they want not niceties and elegance.

## C H A P. XXIV.

THE third book of the prophecies of Isaiah, beginning with this chapter, and extending to the 36th, is divided into three discourses. The FIRST, contained in chap. xxiv—xxvii. consists of a proposition, wherein is set forth the severe judgments of God upon a corrupt church, and the professed enemies of the true religion, chap. xxiv. And of the declaration of that proposition; consisting, first, of a twofold doxology, chap. xxv. xxvi. and secondly, of a prophecy, chap. xxvii. The SECOND discourse, directed against the Ephraimites and Jews, is divided into three sections: the first respects both the Ephraimites and Jews, chap. xxviii. the second the Jews at Jerusalem, chap. xxix. the third sets forth the fate of each nation, looking to Egypt for help, chap. xxx—xxxiii. The THIRD discourse repeats, and more distinctly relates, the divine sentence against the nations and the profecutors of the church, and the benefits of grace for the faithful, chap. xxxiv. xxxv.

*Ver. 1. Behold, &c.*] The first section of the first discourse, contained in this chapter, is twofold: the first member, which properly explains the judgments of God upon a corrupt people, extends to the middle of the 16th verse. The second, wherein also the judgment of God upon the enemies of the church is described, reaches to the end of the chapter. The description of the divine judgment in the former part, is contained in ver. 1—12. to which is subjoined a temperament or alleviation of that judgment, ver. 13. to middle of 16. The divine judgment, in the latter part, reaches from ver. 16. to 20. to which also is subjoined an alleviation of the punishment inflicted upon the enemies of the church, ver. 21—23. In describing the judgment of the former part there are six gradations, separated by the interposition of the cause of this judgment, ver. 5. In the latter part, the cause of the judgment occurs first, ver. 16. and then three gradations, with the last of which is mixed the cause of this judgment. Vitringa is of opinion, that this prophecy, in the latter, refers princi-

pally to the times of the Maccabees; but, as to its mystical sense, to the tremendous judgment of God to be passed upon the enemies of his church, at the latter times of the gospel-state, or at the opening of the sixth seal. See Rev. vi. 12. It is doubtful when this prophecy was delivered; but from various circumstances we may conclude that it was not delivered before the death of Ahaz, or the beginning of the reign of Hezekiah. If, with Vitringa, we refer this prophecy to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, or the Maccabees, the earth, or rather the land here spoken of, must mean Judæa, which, by a total confusion of things both civil and ecclesiastical, was to undergo a grievous and sudden change, to be laid waste, spoiled, and deprived of its inhabitants, and that by the immediate judgment of the Lord; and this was remarkably the case with the land of Judæa in the times referred to. See 1 Mac. i. 26, &c. and ii. 49. Vitringa renders the verse, *Behold, the Lord exhausteth the land, and emptieth it, and turneth up its face, and scattereth the inhabitants thereof.*

*Ver. 3: The land shall be utterly emptied, &c.*] As the public calamities coming upon the land were to be repeated at various times, and in various manners, the sacred writer has accommodated his discourse to these calamities, and divided it into various articles and gradations, whereof this is the second; and it seems most probably to relate to the destruction of the temple, and the desolation of Judæa, by Antiochus Epiphanes; concerning which the reader may refer to his history in Josephus, Antiq. lib. xii. c. 7. and for the better understanding of this prophecy, we will beg leave to recommend a perusal and general comparison of the first book of Maccabees.

*Ver. 4. The earth mourneth and fadeth away*] The earth and the world, here spoken of, mean Judæa and the land of Syria. Heathen writers frequently speak of particular provinces and countries under the name of *orbis*, *orbis habitabilis*, and *orbis terrarum*. The haughty people of the land, or the height of the people, means the priests and magistrates, they who are highly exalted above others; concerning whom, and the mournful state of the land in general, hear the history: *Therefore there was great mourning, in Israel, in every place where they were; so that the princes and the elders mourned*, 1 Mac. i. 25, 26: Vitringa.

*Ver. 5. The earth also is defiled, &c.*] This verse describes, as in a parenthesis, the causes of the divine judgment



6 Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate : therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.

7 The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth, all the merry-hearted do sigh.

8 The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth.

9 They shall not drink wine with a song ; strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it.

10 The city of confusion is broken down : every house is shut up, that no man may come in.

11 *There is a crying for wine in the*

streets ; all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone.

12 In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction.

13 ¶ When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people, *there shall be as the shaking of an olive-tree, and as the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done.*

14 They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the LORD, they shall cry aloud from the sea.

15 Wherefore glorify ye the LORD in the fires, *even* the name of the LORD God of Israel in the isles of the sea.

16 ¶ From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, *even* glory to the righ-

ment upon the land, and shews us the true scene of the prophecy: the principal cause is the shedding of innocent blood, as well of their brethren, as of the professors of the true religion, against all laws human and divine, and the common rights of nature and nations; for this is the import of the expression, *The earth is foully polluted under the inhabitants thereof.* See Numb. xxxv. 33. and ch. xxvi. 21. This was remarkably the case in the period referred to. See 1 Mac. i. 15. and 2 Mac. viii. 2—4.

*Ver. 6. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth*] This verse contains the fourth gradation, and is well illustrated by Zech. v. 1, &c. The phrase *are burned*, refers to the internal consumption and decay. See Job, xxx. 30. Pf. lxxix. 3. The meaning of the prophet is, that the principal inhabitants of the land should waste away, be gradually consumed, and perish; whether dispersed by the public calamities, or reduced to poverty by the spoiling of their goods; so that few of them should remain, and they only of the poorer sort; and this was the face of things in Judæa at the time referred to.

*Ver. 7—9. The new wine mourneth*] In this fifth gradation we have a fine and pathetic description of a once flourishing land, entirely ruined and desolated by a destructive enemy. There is no difficulty in the words, nor in the fact, which is most notorious from history; for at this period, says the author of the book of Maccabees, *there was so great mourning in Israel, that even every bridegroom took up lamentation, and she that sat in the marriage-chamber was in heaviness: Joy was taken from Jacob, and the pipe with the harp ceased.* 1 Mac. i. 27. iii. 45.

*Ver. 10—12. The city of confusion, &c.*] We have here the sixth gradation, which requires no other comment than to be compared with the history, 1 Mac. iii. 45, &c. See also ch. xvi. 8—10. which will explain the phrase, *There is a crying for wine in the streets.* Wine here denotes the matter of joy and mirth, as appears from the next words; *There is a crying for want of wine*; i. e. for the want of that joy and mirth which is produced by wine. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 13—16. When thus it shall be*] Or, *But yet thus*

*shall it be in the midst of the land among the people, like as upon the threshing of the olive, and as the gleaning of grapes, &c.* [see chap. xvii. 6.] *ver. 14. They shall lift up their voices: they shall sing, for the majesty of Jehovah, &c.*—*Ver. 15. Wherefore in the distant coasts glorify ye Jehovah, &c.* [See 1 Mac. i. 53. ii. 31, &c.]—*Ver. 16. From the extremity of the land we hear songs, "To the righteous glory."* These words contain the alleviation of the preceding judgment; and their reference to the history of the Maccabees is abundantly plain. The sum of them is this, "It shall come to pass, that while the whole land of Judæa, at this time part of Syria, shall be laid waste, its inhabitants in general being either killed or carried into captivity, or scattered by flight into the islands of the Mediterranean sea, or Egypt itself, and others *lurking in dens and caves*, in the extremities of southern Judæa,—Judas Maccabeus, with his brothers, shall arise, a captain and a leader, who, after having conquered, by the divine help, the enemies of his country in several battles, and purified the temple for three years deserted, and spread far and wide the fame of his exploits, shall shine as an unexpected light upon the Jews, the lovers of their country and religion; who, whether they had fled to Cyprus, Cilicia, Egypt, or the isles of the Mediterranean sea, or whether they yet fearfully lurked in the dens and caves of Judæa, shall all unite to praise the supreme grace and power of God, and to acknowledge the virtues of Judas Maccabeus and his brothers." We have seen from former parts of the Jewish history, particularly that of David, an account of the remarkable caverns with which Judæa was abounded; and which, we learn from the history of the Maccabees, were much frequented in those disastrous times.

*Ver. 16. But I said, My leanness, my leanness!* *But I said, Leanness to me, leanness to me!* The latter part of the first section begins at this verse, which contains the prophet's introduction, together with the cause of a new judgment, which he was about to denounce. Having set forth, in the former verses, the pleasing appearances of restoration to the people of God, a new calamity presents itself before

teous. But I said, My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me; the treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously, yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously.

17 Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth.

18 And it shall come to pass, that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake.

19 The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved

exceedingly.

20 The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall and not rise again.

21 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth:

22 And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited.

23 Then the moon shall be confounded,

him, namely, the mournful death of Judas Maccabeus, with its melancholy consequences: upon which he bursts forth into words strongly expressive of the perturbation of his mind, *Leanness to me, leanness to me*: as much as to say, that upon the appearance of this new calamity, he was full of horror and trembling; whatever was florid in his flesh fell, and grew pale; his limbs became flaccid, and his former appearance was lost and changed (Comp. ch. x. 16. Pf. cix. 24.). The following words are so constructed, as to raise in us a sense of the highest perfidy and injustice with which that pious people, who had just now been raised to better hopes, should be oppressed. See Jer. xii. 1. The history of the period here referred to will very much elucidate the prophet. See 1 Mac. vii. 17, 18. ix. 20—27.

Ver. 17, 18. *Fear, and the pit, and the snare*] The prophet proceeds to set forth the judgment itself, with its various gradations, the first of which is contained in these verses. The meaning is, that it should be a time of extreme straits and difficulties in which every one should be so surrounded with various dangers, that if he escaped one, he would easily fall into another, and undoubtedly perish. See Jer. xlvi. 43. and Amos, v. 19. There is a remarkable elegance in the original of the 17th verse, and great sublimity in the latter clause of the 18th, where the ideas and expressions are taken from the deluge, and are strongly expressive of that deluge of divine wrath which should fall upon, and totally overwhelm the apostate enemies of their religion and country. See Josephus, and the history of those times.

Ver. 19, 20. *The earth is utterly broken down*] The prophet here, in the most chosen metaphorical expressions, describes a mighty earthquake, by which the land of Asia, Syria, Judæa, depressed by the divine judgments, should be vehemently shaken. The 20th verse should be rendered in the present tense, like the 19th. *The land reels to and fro like a drunkard, and is shaken like a cottage in a garden; [chap. i. 8.] because the transgression thereof is heavy upon it, and it falls, and shall not rise again.* Earthquakes, metaphorically taken in Scripture, denote those great and hurtful changes which happen in the world or the church. We learn, however, that at the period here referred to there was a remarkably great earthquake, by which, as Justin informs

us, lib. xl. cap. 2. a hundred and seventy thousand men and many cities were destroyed.

Ver. 21, 22. *And it shall come to pass in that day*] The prophet continues to describe the terrible judgments of God, whereby the profane, the hypocrites, and the persecutors of the true religion, should be punished about the same time wherein we fix the scene of this prophesy. By *the host of the high ones on high*, some understand the *kings of Assyria*; but Vitringa thinks that it is plain beyond dispute, particularly from Dan. viii. 10, &c. that the profane and apostate *priests* are here meant, as the kings are spoken of in the next clause. See on ver. 4. The phrase, *After many days shall they be visited*, at the end of the 22d verse, signifies, that many days, or a long time, after the delivery of this prophesy, the persons here spoken of should be punished according to the prediction; as appears from the same phrase used in this sense, Ezek. xxxviii. 8. The history of the times fully confirms this exposition, as appears from the unhappy end of Jason, Menelaus, Antiochus Epiphanes, and many others. See 2 Mac. v. 8, 9. 1 Mac. ix. 55, 56, &c.

Ver. 23. *Then the moon shall be confounded*] In this verse we have the alleviation or consequence of this judgment, with respect to the church. The simple sense of the words is plain, namely, that at the time, or after the time, wherein God should take vengeance upon the enemies of his people, his kingdom, restored and reformed, should shine more gloriously than the sun and moon in their orbs, when they appear in the greatest splendor and majesty to the eyes of men; which was remarkably the case under the Asmonean princes. The interior and recondite sense is, that at the time in which God *should take the kingdom*, not typically, but truly, it should come to pass that a certain mystical *sun*, and mystical *moon*, should be obscured, and cease to shine. See Joel, ii. 31. Rev. vi. 13. and Matt. xxiv. 29. The *sun*, and *moon*, and *stars*, &c. in the mystical language of Scripture, signify political rulers of states, as we have had occasion to observe before. The mystical explication of this prophesy is to be drawn from that part of the *revelation* to which we have before referred, and which shall be enlarged upon when we come to that part of the New Testament.

and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of rusalem, and before his ancients gloriously. Hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Je-

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The immediate subject of this prophecy is Judæa; but in its most extensive sense may include the constant desolations which, by wars, are made in the earth; and may foretel the ruin of antichrist.

1. The earth, either the land of Judæa in particular, or the world in general, is represented in such confusion and desolation, as in its chaotic state; emptied of inhabitants, as a vessel turned upside down, without distinction of age, sex, station, or office, utterly spoiled and wasted, mourning under the judgments inflicted, fading like a flower, languishing as one under a severe disease, burnt up as with fire, and so desolate that few men remain. The proud and haughty are laid low before the heavy scourge. The fruit of the vine is destroyed by the inclement seasons, or the trees cut down by the ravagers; and those who spent in jollity the day, now sigh out their inconsolable sorrows. All joyful sounds are banished, and music is forgotten amid the dreary scene. The songs of the board of feasting are at an end, and strong drink no longer pleasant, when mingled with their tears, or become tasteless through their sickness and diseases. The city of confusion is broken down, the houses empty, the inhabitants slain by famine or the sword, and none remaining. Reduced to the deepest distress, their stores fail them in the siege, their joys are fled, their hopes desperate. Desolation reigns through the city, and the defences are ruined. If this be applied to Judæa, it paints the terrible destruction made by Antiochus, or, as some will have it, by Nebuchadnezzar; if to the fall of antichrist, we may see the like judgments predicted, Rev. xviii. It should teach us, [1.] The vanity of the creature, and the necessity of seeking a better portion than that which is so transitory and uncertain. [2.] Death is continually making its ravages, we need be always ready. [3.] We should rejoice as if we rejoiced not, when we stand thus daily in jeopardy of having our joy turned into mourning. [4.] If the priest join the people in their iniquities, he will be the first and deepest in the punishment which God threatens to inflict.

2. The cause of this judgment is sin, provoking most justly the divine wrath and indignation. They have transgressed God's laws, changed his ordinances and worship in opposition to his prescribed appointment, and broken the everlasting covenant, and therefore the curse of God terribly descends. This was fully verified in the Jews, whose disobedience to God's laws, and instituted ordinances of worship, brought on their ruin, and forfeited all the mercies promised in the everlasting covenant of grace. Nor less applicable is it to the Romish church, where dispensations for sin gave a licence for iniquity, and all the ordinances of Christ are corrupted, or mutilated, and the Scriptures themselves perverted.

2dly, In the midst of the desolations threatened, a few escape the general ruin.

1. They are like the berries left on the olive-tree, after it has been shaken; and like the gleaning grapes, one here and there, which escaped observation when the rest were gathered for the vintage. *Note;* (1.) God has had a people, when iniquity has been most prevalent. (2.) What-

ever judgments he inflicts, they shall be hid in the day of his fierce anger.

2. A sense of the mercy manifested in their deliverance will awaken their gratitude and praise. Into whatever distant lands they may have been dispersed, *they shall sing for the majesty of the Lord*, magnified now in the destruction of their enemies. *Note;* The people of God will never want matter for their praise. In the days of deepest visitation, to the godly there riseth up light in the darkness.

3. They endeavour to improve these judgments, exhorting each other *to glorify the Lord in the fires, or the vallies*, in the sharpest pangs of sorrow, and the lowest state of abasement; acknowledging their suffering to be the just desert of their sins, and humbling themselves for them before God, in the most distant isles of the sea, whither they fled. *Note;* (1.) They who are God's people cannot but be zealous for his glory. (2.) When we are in the furnace of affliction, we have a peculiar call to consider our ways, and turn unto the Lord. (3.) We glorify God especially, when in our deepest distresses we trust his promises.

This may be evidently applied to the Jewish people; among whom, in the worst times, God had a few who feared and loved him; and when he turned their captivity under Cyrus, and when they conquered under Judas Maccabeus, they saw their oppressors fallen, and, in the places whither they had been dispersed, glorified God for his mercy remembered in the midst of judgment. But it may also regard the faithful, under the oppression of antichrist, preserved for God, Rev. xviii. 4. rejoicing at the fall of Rome, Rev. xix. 1—3. whereof the isles of the sea, and our own particularly, will be glad, and glorify God for his righteous judgments.

3dly, The words from ver. 16th to the conclusion of the chapter may be well applied to the ruin of Babylon, and the joy of the Jews on their return thence; but more particularly refer to the conquests of the Maccabees over the armies of Antiochus; or, which seems still an infinitely more noble view of the prophecy, to the triumphs of the saints, when Christ shall have subdued every foe, and shall reign over his ancients gloriously in the new Jerusalem.

1. The joy of the faithful in all lands is heard, giving glory *to the righteous*, to the Lord Jesus Christ, for the propagation of his Gospel, and the subduing of the enemies of the Christian name, Rev. xix. 1—7. or saying *glory to the righteous ones*, who, oppressed and persecuted as they had been, now will shine as stars in the firmament for ever and ever.

2. The prophet mourns on the prospect of the evil days which should precede the coming of Christ, when such perfidy would reign among men, and so general a departure from God prevail, that he should scarcely find faith in the earth. *Note;* The true prophets cannot behold a wicked world without feeling distress for their impending miseries.

3. The perplexity and distress of men's minds, Luke, xxi. 25—35. at the approach of the day of Christ, are described

## C H A P. XXV.

*The prophet praiseth God for his judgments, for his saving benefits, and for his victorious salvation.*

[Before Christ 715.]

**O** LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.

2 For thou hast made of a city an heap; of a defenced city a ruin: a palace of strangers

described by an elegant paronomasia. פחד *Pachad*, פחת *pachath*, פח *pach*; fear, the pit, the snare are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth; no place affords shelter or refuge for the sinner's soul. *Note*; When the day of the Lord cometh, it will be too late to fly, and impossible to escape. The way to prevent our terrors is, now to fly to the arms of Jesus for pardon and grace, that then we may confidently appear before our Judge.

4. The destruction of the world may be considered as represented here. It is utterly shaken in pieces, and reduced to its chaotic state of confusion, removed as a cottage, and doomed to eternal desolations, for the heavy iniquity which lies thereon, Rev. xx. 11. *Note*; Sin is the burden under which the world groans; to this origin may every evil we suffer be traced, for this is the curse upon the earth.

5. As an introduction to that great day, God will punish the hosts of the high ones that are on high, the king of Babylon, the kings of Assyria, and all the apostate priests; and also the man of sin, who exalteth himself above all that is called God, surrounded by an army of monks and friars, his champions: and the kings of the earth, who have subjected themselves under his dominion, and make war against the saints, to support the usurpations of the idolatrous church of Rome, Rev. xvii. 2—14. being vanquished and subdued, they shall be shut up as prisoners in the pit, reserved in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day, when they shall finally receive their doom.

6. The glorious triumphs of the Redeemer will appear, when all the powers of earth are fallen before him, represented by the sun and moon. Then will he reign before his ancients gloriously, or his ancients in glory, reigning with him, and made to sit down together on his eternal throne. *Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such, the second death hath no power.* See Rev. xx.

## C H A P. XXV.

THE deliverance of the church, with God's terrible judgments on his enemies, having been exhibited to the prophet in vision, he assumes the person, as it were, of this delivered church, and so subjoins to his prophesy a triumphal song, or two-fold doxology, of similar argument, contained in this and the next chapter. In this first part he celebrates the great benefit conferred upon the church at this time, and extols no less the grace and power than the fidelity of God in fulfilling his promises. There are two members of this doxology; the former comprehended

to be no city; it shall never be built.

3 Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee, the city of the terrible nations shall fear thee.

4 For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.

5 Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers, as the heat in a dry place; even

in ver. 1—8. the latter ver. 9—12. In the former we have, first, the proposition, with its general argument; ver. 1. namely, the purpose of celebrating the faith and truth of God, publicly shewn in avenging his church in its greatest calamity; secondly, a special declaration of that proposition, celebrating the benefits conferred upon the church at this time, with their consequences, whereof there are four gradations; the first, in ver. 2.; the second, ver. 3, 5.; the third, ver. 6.; the fourth, ver. 7, 8. The other member is constructed in the same manner. It contains a proposition, by which the church excites to the divine praise; ver. 9. and the arguments or reasons of that proposition, in two gradations; the first in ver. 10, 11.; the second in ver. 12.

*Ver. 1. O Lord, thou art my God*] The elegance of the prophet is observable in this verse, which he begins without any connecting particle or introduction; bursting out immediately into praise, upon a sight of the great deliverance spoken of in the last verse of the preceding chapter. It is commonly thought that the elders and teachers of the people are here introduced as the first speakers. *Thy counsels of old*, or *from far*, signify not only those long before taken, but also which had been long before declared and published by the prophets. *Faithfulness and truth*, is in the Hebrew, אמונה אמת *emunah omen*, the truest truth, or, the most faithful faith; an emphatical expression, shewing that there is the most exact analogy between the promise and the completion of the promise; so that the completion exhibits the most pure fidelity of God. *Vitringa.* See 1 Mac. iv. 24.

*Ver. 2. For thou hast made of a city, an heap*] The prophet here plainly speaks of the destruction of a city; but respecting what city is meant interpreters greatly vary. *Vitringa* seems to have proved clearly that *Babylon* is meant, which was emphatically called *the city*; which was remarkably fortified, and which was inhabited by strangers, as the Assyrians and Babylonians are commonly called in prophetic language; and in the destruction of which the ancient believers rejoiced most especially, having therein a pledge and earnest of future deliverance, and particularly a type of the deliverance of the Christian church from persecution by the fall of spiritual Babylon. See Rev. xviii. 20. xix. 1, &c.

*Ver. 3—5. Therefore, &c.*] These verses contain another gradation of this triumphal song; the meaning whereof is, that the deliverance and salvation which God had procured

the heat with the shadow of a cloud: the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low.

6 ¶ And in this mountain shall the LORD of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

7 And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations.

8 He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people

shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.

9 And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

10 For in this mountain shall the hand of the LORD rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill.

11 And he shall spread forth his hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands to swim: and he

cured by his right hand for his people, reduced to extreme straits, and, as it seemed, about to perish, should conciliate to him the reverence and honour of powerful and fierce nations; nay, even of those very nations which had opposed the church, and had affected empire over it, and of the city itself, the metropolis of those nations. The fourth and fifth verses should be rendered, *for thou hast been, &c. a shadow from the heat: for the blast of the violent is as a winter's storm.* Ver. 5. *As heat in a dry place, so is the tumult of my enemies. Thou breakest the heat with the shadow of a cloud. The proud singing of the violent shall be brought down.* The church praises Jehovah for his protection against the violent persecution of her enemies, which she compares to a wintry storm, and to the burning heat of the sun, tempered by the intervening protection of God, like the shadow of a thick cloud. See chap. iv. 6. There seems no doubt that the *strong people* here spoken of means the Romans. See 1 Mac. viii. 17, &c. xii. 1, &c. and the other historians. For the mystical exposition of this prophecy, we refer to Rev. vi. and viii. as before.

Ver. 6. *And in this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts*] The words in this third gradation are to be understood partly as a commemoration of the benefit performed, partly as continuing and perfecting the prophecy concerning it. The sense of the metaphor is, that God would provide on mount Sion, for all people, matter of great and consummate joy; which should arise not from temporal causes only, but principally from spiritual ones; which should bring to the mind tranquillity, comfort, and acquiescence in its present state. See Zech. xiv. With respect to the prophetic part, this may refer primarily to the profelytes who were made to the Jewish religion after the times of the Maccabees; and secondarily to the Gospel-feast. See Matt. viii. 11. Psal. xxii. 27, &c. *Wines on the lees*, might perhaps with more propriety be rendered, *Wines from the lees*; as the expression seems to denote wines which were purified and made fit for drinking.

Ver. 7, 8. *And he will destroy, &c.*] Vitringa thinks, with the Chaldee, that the *covering* and *veil* here spoken of mean Death; that mighty ruler, who covers the whole race of men with his black garment, and hides them in obscure night; that *by the face of this covering*, which is

*the face of death*, are meant the miseries, calamities, afflictions, and persecutions, which believers in that country should sustain on account of their religion, under various forms and appearances; as well as the ministers of those evils, the instruments of Satan, the irreligious kings and princes of the world; and that by the *taking away*, or *swallowing up* the face of this covering, are designed the abolition of this persecution and trouble, and the entire destruction of all the public persecutors of the true church, in that land more especially. The comparison is fine, and worthy of our prophet; and the next verse is exegetical of it, wherein, however, such great and excellent things are said, that it does not become us to affix any mean or limited sense to them; for though the words primarily refer to the public persecutions of those times, yet there can be no doubt that they have a much higher reference, as appears abundantly from 1 Cor. xv. 54. See also Rev. xx. 14. and, respecting their historical completion, a remarkable passage in 1 Mac. xiv. 6, &c. For the rest, they will not have their full and ultimate completion till that day, when there shall be no more death, and *God himself shall wipe away all tears from all eyes.* See Rev. xxi. 4.

Ver. 9. *And it shall be said*] This verse contains the proposition of the antistrophe, or antiphonal part of this doxology, wherein the people may be supposed to sing in reply to the former part, which, as we have observed, was the song of the elders. It was to be sung *on that day*, or at that time, in which God had wrought his wonders for the salvation of his people. The expressions are strong and glowing, and are well suited to that state of mind which is the consequence of high favours and signal deliverances vouchsafed from God.

Ver. 10—12. *For in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord*] In these verses we have a confirmation of the proposition; and they contain two arguments for the confidence and rejoicing of the people of God; the one taken from Moab, ver. 10, 11.; the other from the Babylonians, their true or mystical enemies. The judgment upon Moab is set forth under two figures; the *first* in the 10th verse, the meaning whereof is, that God would entirely tread down, break, and destroy the power of Moab, to their extreme disgrace. In the *second*, God is compared to

shall bring down their pride together with the spoils of their hands.

12 And the fortrefs of the high fort of

thy walls shall he bring down, lay low, and bring to the ground, *even* to the dust.

a swimmer, swimming in the land of Moab as it were in a great sea or river, stretching forth his hands to the utmost limits of Moab, and beating down with his arms whatever opposed him. The single idea of the comparison rests in the stretching out the hands, and beating down with them the opposing water. We learn from the history of those times, that the Moabites were great enemies to, but were entirely subdued by, the Maccabees, who fought many battles with them, till at length they were discomfited, &c. See 1 Mac. v. 7, &c. Mystically, by the Moabites and Babylonians are to be understood the adversaries of the kingdom of Christ. Compare the 12th verse with the second, and see Vitringa.

**REFLECTIONS.**—1st, We have here the triumphant song of God's people for their deliverance; either that of the Jews, for the ruin of Babylon, and the destruction of the kings of Assyria; or that of the faithful for the fall of spiritual Babylon; or of both, the former being typical of the latter.

1. The prophet in the person of the people of God, resolves to praise and exalt the name of Jehovah, for all his wonderful works of mercy to his believing people, and judgment on their enemies, according to his faithfulness in the never-failing promises of his word. And nothing would engage him to this honourable work so heartily, as the consciousness of an interest in the favour of this glorious and exalted Jehovah, *thou art my God, and I will praise thy name.* Note; (1.) They who can say, *My God,* are bound to praise him evermore. (2.) The wonders of providence and creation are marvellous; but those of redemption greater still, and will be the everlasting subject of the songs in glory.

2. He particularly mentions two instances of God's faithfulness and truth, for which he would exalt him. (1.) For the destruction of the oppressor, *thou hast made of a city, an heap, &c.* As Babylon now is, Rome will be; the former was a *palace of strangers*, ch. xxiii. 13. so is the latter, succeeding to the former Pagan inhabitants: the one now lieth in ruins, and such will the fate of the other be, to perish for ever, and *never be built again.* (2.) For the protection of the poor, whose strength God is in every time of trouble, covering them as with a cloud from the scorching heat of temptation, and preserving them from the storm of the terrible ones, interposing, as a wall, to ward off the tempest. Thus God preserved his people in Babylon, and brought them out safely, and so will do under all the persecutions of antichrist; and, in general, under every distress, his people who fly to him will find him a *very present help in trouble.*

3. The effect of God's interposition would be either the humiliation and conviction, or the utter ruin of his foes. They are called *strong people, terrible nations, terrible ones;* but however dreadful they may appear to others, they must stoop before God, and bow in fear before his rod of correction; repenting and glorifying his mercy, or

breaking under the rod of his judgments, and glorifying his justice: *their branch, or their song,* brought low; either in the dust of abasement, or in the place of torment; where, as a branch cast out, they would be burned, and their mirth be changed into eternal mourning. Note; (1.) The formidable appearance of our foes is often ready to intimidate us; but if the Almighty God be for us, the terrible shall be brought low, and even death, the king of terrors, be subdued. (2.) When the judgments of God, however heavy, lead men to fear before him, and to do no more wickedly, they become the choicest blessings; and judgment, as well as mercy, shall then furnish matter for a song.

2dly, We have a key to open this scripture, 1 Cor. xv. 54. and see therein some of the great and precious promises of life and immortality brought to light by the Gospel.

1. Under the image of a royal feast, Matt. xxii. 1, &c. a view is presented to us of the Gospel-dispensation. *The Lord of Hosts, the Lord Jesus, the great master of the feast in this mountain, the church of his faithful redeemed, makes unto all people a feast;* some of all nations will partake of it, Gentiles as well as Jews; and the invitation thereto is universal, *whosoever will let him come;* there is here enough and to spare; for it is a *feast of fat things, full of marrow, and of wine on the lees well refined,* plenty, and of the best sort, is provided; there is nothing wanting which a soul hungering and thirsting after righteousness can need; pardon, peace, grace, strength, consolation, glory; all are ready, and a more refreshing provision to the soul, than the best-spread table to the famished; or than the strongest wines to the faint. Blessed and happy are they, who sincerely accept of the invitation to this feast!

2. The Lord Jesus *will also destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people:* as malefactors led to execution with their faces covered, so had the sons of men by sin forfeited their lives to divine justice; or as the dead wrapped in grave-clothes, so were we dead in trespasses and sins, till Christ, first in promise, and then in reality, came to redeem us from going down to the pit, by paying the ransom for us, and also to rescue us from the death of sin by his quickening Spirit: *and the veil that is spread over all nations,* of gross darkness and spiritual ignorance, will soon be dispelled before him the Light of life, like the shadows of the night before the rising sun.

3. Even death itself shall be a vanquished foe. *He will swallow up death in victory;* not only by his own resurrection leading captivity captive, and quickening his people dead in trespasses and sins; but by the final destruction of death, when all the bodies which sleep in dust shall rise at the great day of Jesus's appearing and glory, and especially those of his saints shall be raised to glory and honour, and mortality be thus swallowed up of life. Note; (1.) What joy and consolation does the faith of Jesus impart, which thus enables us to triumph over the king of terrors, and cry,

## C H A P. XXVI.

*A song inciting to confidence in God, for his judgments, and for his favour to his people. An exhortation to wait on God.*

[Before Christ 715.]

**I**N that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city;

salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.

2 Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.

3 Thou wilt keep *him* in perfect peace, *whose mind is stayed on thee*: because he trusteth in thee.

cry, *O death, where is thy sting?* (2.) Whatever burdens this corruptible body feels now, we may well say they are light afflictions which endure but for a moment; and we may patiently and cheerfully endure them, because of our hope in the end of a glorious resurrection.

4. All grief and shame will then be done away. As a tender parent, our divine Lord shall dry up his children's tears; no sins will then awaken their sorrows, or afflictions disturb their repose; no reproach blacken their character, or oppressor vex and grieve them, but everlasting joy be upon their heads; their beauty of holiness without spot; and their enemies will behold them clothed with glory, and wonder and perish. How light then should every sorrow sit, how easy ought we to be under the malignant aspersions or perverse unkindness of men, when we shall in a moment come to endless bliss, and shine as stars in the firmament for ever and ever?

5. Great will be the joy of the faithful in that day. By faith and hope, they often triumphed here below; but the consummation of their bliss in glory they waited and devoutly wished for. And lo! glad tidings of great joy; he is come! he is come! *this is our God*, our Jesus, our salvation, our joy; eternity shall hear his praise. *Note*: (1.) They who by faith wait in hope shall not be disappointed. (2.) In glory all the praise will be ascribed to Jesus, and every crown be laid at his blessed feet.

6. The perpetuity of this blessedness in glory is ensured by the Lord's dwelling in the midst of his faithful people. In this mountain his hand shall rest, his presence be ever manifested, his power engaged to preserve them, and all his goodness to make them eternally happy.

7. The enemy shall be utterly destroyed. Moab, the representative of all the foes of God's church and people, spiritual and temporal, shall be trodden down, as mire in the street. As the swimmer spreads his hands, so will the Lord stretch forth his arm of vengeance, executing his judgment on the proud, and spoiling the spoiler. All the fortresses of Moab shall fall, and their utter destruction be certain, sudden, and irrecoverable. And thus shall all the antichristian powers perish at last, and Satan, death, and hell, be cast together into the burning lake, Rev. xix. 20. xx. 14, 15.

## C H A P. XXVI.

**THIS** chapter contains the second doxology, and is truly poetical. It is twofold: We have first, after the preface, ver. 1. the song of the true believers, which consists of different parts. The *first* sets forth a confessional and fiducial celebration of the benefit conferred upon the church: the *second* addresses, in a congratulatory manner, these confessors of the truth, who had not fallen away in the time of dis-

tress, ver. 2. The *third* explains the faith and hope of the children of God, ver. 3. The *fourth* exhorts the brethren of a weaker mind, from the deliverance now granted to the church, to arm themselves with the same confidence against all fears and temptations, ver. 4—6. The *fifth*, turning the discourse to God, delivers a confession concerning the divine judgments, their causes and effects, and the disposition of the holy and the wicked towards them, ver. 7—19. In which confession the pious *first* acknowledge, in general, the equity of the ways of God toward the righteous in those judgments which he executes upon the church, ver. 7. *Secondly*, they set forth their own disposition respecting those judgments, ver. 8, 9. *Thirdly*, the disposition of the wicked, ver. 10, 11. *Fourthly*, they particularly set forth the lively faith, hope, and confidence which they had maintained in the time of affliction, ver. 12—19. The epilogue, or the prophet's conclusion of this song, making its second part, is simple, and of an historical style, corroborating the hope and faith of the church, and conceived in the manner of an answer to the above confession, ver. 20, 21. The whole structure of the song, as well with respect to argument as composition, is very similar to the cxviii Psalm. Vitringa.

*Ver. 1. In that day*] That is, at the time of the deliverance which the church had gained by the divine aid, which time is that of Simon the Ethnarch and John Hyrcanus, if we take the prophesy literally; if mystically, the times of the deliverance of the Christian church from its great afflictions, which we shall consider at large when we come to our commentary on the Revelation. *The land of Judah*, literally and mystically, is the land of the *confessors* of the true religion. It is certain that this song can only have its true and full completion in its reference to the Gospel. The latter part of this verse contains the confessional praise for the blessing of deliverance and salvation, which the chorus may be supposed to sing: as much as to say, "Though in our distressed and almost desperate estate, no walls and bulwarks, no human defence remained to us; yet Jehovah was present, who is infinitely more powerful, and a far better defence, than any of these. In him we had a strong city: his salvation was to us, and will ever be, a wall and a bulwark." Such we may suppose to have been the language of believers at the period of history referred to; see 2 Mac. xiii. 15—17. and such will be the voice and confession of the saints at the last period of the deliverance of the church.

*Ver. 2. Open ye the gates*] We have here another chorus, congratulating those who have been found faithful in affliction, and proclaiming that they should have communion not only with the earthly Jerusalem, and the earthly temple, but also with the spiritual and heavenly city and

4 Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength:

5 ¶ For he bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, he layeth it low; he layeth it low, *even* to the ground; he bringeth it *even* to the dust.

6 The foot shall tread it down, *even* the feet of the poor, *and* the steps of the needy.

7 The way of the just is uprightnes: thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just.

8 Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee; the desire of *our* soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.

9 With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I

seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

10 Let favour be shewed to the wicked, *yet* will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightnes will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD.

11 LORD, *when* thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: *but* they shall see, and be ashamed for *their* envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.

12 ¶ LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us; for thou also hast wrought all our works in us.

13 O LORD our God, *other* lords besides thee have had dominion over us: *but* by thee only will we make mention of thy name.

temple; and the scene is so formed as if the chorus here introduced saw these confessors, delivered from prison and distress, returning in great companies to their own country, hastening to Jerusalem and the temple, there to present their grateful praises to God; and upon the sight of them, they call out to the governors of the city and temple to admit these children of the Most High into the holy city.

*That the righteous nation, &c.] And let the righteous nation enter; ver. 3. constant in the truth, stayed in mind; thou shalt preserve them in perpetual peace, because they have trusted in thee. Lowth. See ver. 12. and chap. xxxii. 17, 18.*

*Ver. 4—6. Trust ye in the Lord.] The fourth chorus, in these verses, contains an exhortation directed to others to place their confidence in God, upon the knowledge and observation of the present illustrious deliverance vouchsafed. The fifth and sixth verses should be rendered in the perfect tense, He hath brought down, &c. The foot hath trodden down. See chap. xxv. 2. 12.*

*Ver. 7. The way, &c.] Or, The way [chalked out] to the just is perfectly right. Thou, most upright, dost mark out the path of the just. Here begins the confession, which is extended to the 19th verse. In this verse the believers acknowledge the equity and justice of the ways of God in general toward his people. The meaning of the prophet is, that the state and condition of the life of the just, with all its circumstances and events, is so circumscribed and defined by the divine providence, that it is exactly accommodated to all the reasons of wisdom, justice, and goodness; and, though it may seem otherwise to the carnal eye, yet nothing occurs in the œconomy of the divine providence towards them, which can reasonably be found fault with. See Vitringa's *Observationes Sacrae*, lib. iii. cap. 15.*

*Ver. 8, 9. Yea, in the way of thy judgments.] How excellently does this passage correspond to the preceding, according to the interpretation we have given! The holy confessors, persuaded of the equity and justice of the ways of God, here declare with what disposition of mind they receive the trial with which God thought proper in his wis-*

dom to exercise them. The heavy afflictions under which they groaned were so far from extinguishing their hope and love, that on the contrary they greatly excited and promoted these laudable affections; for, being thoroughly persuaded that the ways of God are right, and that God will not suffer those whom he loves to be tempted above what they are able to bear, by *waiting* for judgment from a God the just judge of the world, they testify that they have united themselves to him, by a studious exercise of their souls. See Ps. xvi. 7. 1 Pet. iv. 17. The change of person, in the 9th verse, is very common in our prophet.

*Ver. 10, 11. Let favour be shewed, &c.] This passage corresponds with the former in such a manner as to illustrate it. The chorus had shewn the necessity of the divine judgments, and the disposition of the righteous towards them. They continue their discourse, and say, that the wicked, when God, out of his long-suffering mercy, spares them, turn even this into a motive for greater insolence, and rage so much the more fiercely against the pious, as if they were secure from the divine vengeance. Such men will not learn righteousness, but will deal perversely even in the land of uprightnes, or rectitudes: [that is to say, in Canaan, where God had his prophets and teachers who taught what was true and right. See chap. xxx. 10.] and will not observe the majesty of Jehovah; that is, when he first begins to avenge his people, they will not acknowledge that he is their avenger, and that he exerts his glory and power for their salvation. The chorus then go on to say, ver. 11. That though they will not acknowledge the divine hand, they shall at length be compelled with shame to do so, in consequence of God's various and repeated judgments upon the enemies of his people. Vitringa renders the 11th verse, Lord, thy hand is lifted up; they do not see: But they shall see, and be ashamed: The zeal [thou hast] for thy people, yea first, shall devour thine enemies. See chap. ix. 7.*

*Ver. 13, 14. O Lord our God.] The holy confessors, having in the preceding verse expressed their hope that God would perfect all his good works for them, proceed to unfold that hope; after having already obtained their de-*

liverance



14 *They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish.*

15 *Thou hast increased the nation, O LORD, thou hast increased the nation: thou art glorified: thou hast removed it far unto all the ends of the earth.*

16 *LORD, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.*

17 *Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O LORD.*

18 *We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.*

19 *Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake, and*

liverance in part with the overthrow and destruction of their enemies. They say, that other lords besides Jehovah had obtained power and dominion over them,—which literally signifies the Babylonians, Persians, &c.; mystically, the spiritual enemies of the church; but now delivered from this servitude, they add, that they will remember the name of God, or make mention of it by God only. The meaning whereof is, that, owing their delivery solely to God, and not to the intervention of any temporal power, they would give thanks to him alone for the benefit, and acknowledge their salvation as due to him only. Bishop Lowth reads it, *Thee only, and thy name, henceforth will we celebrate.* See Pl. lxxi. 16. The 14th verse should be rendered, *The dead shall not revive, the deceased shall not rise;* and the meaning is, that the enemies of the church were so totally destroyed, that they should not be able to rise any more to hurt or persecute the people of God. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 15. Thou hast increased the nation.]* Vitringa renders the last clause of this verse, *Thou hast far enlarged all the boundaries of the land.* The meaning is, that God had treated his people so kindly, as to increase, adorn, and amplify them with various benefits of his grace and benediction, thus conciliating great glory to his own name; and had extended the boundaries of the land of Judæa much more than under the most flourishing kings. There requires nothing more to shew the completion of this part of the prophecy than the following words of Josephus: “Now at this time [the time of Alexander Jannæus] the Jews were in possession of the following cities, which had belonged to the Syrians, Idumæans, and Phœnicians. At the sea-side, Strato’s Tower, Apollonia, Joppa, Jamnia, Ashdod, Gaza, Anthedon, Raphia, and Rhinocolura: In the middle of the country, near to Idumea, Adora and Marissa; near the country of Samaria, Mount Carmel and Mount Tabor, Scythopolis and Gadara; of the country of Gaulonitis, Seleucia and Gabala; in the country of Moab, Heshbon and Medaba, Lemba and Oronas, Gelithon, Zara, the valley of the Cilices, and Pella; which last they utterly destroyed, because its inhabitants could not bear to change their religious rites for those peculiar to the Jews. The Jews also possessed others of the principal cities of Syria, which had been destroyed.” Antiq. lib. xiii. cap. 15. sect. 4. See Obad. ver. 18, &c. and Zech. ix. 1, &c.

*Ver. 16—18. Lord, in trouble have they visited thee.]* O JEHOVAH, *in affliction have we sought thee.* Lowth. The 18th verse may be read, *We had conceived; we were in pain; we brought forth as it were wind: As to deliverance, it was not yet perfected in the land, neither had the inhabitants of the world fallen.* While the pious believers revolve in their minds the benefits of the present times, they recollect those preceding, in which they had long groaned under various tribulations, from which they could not deliver themselves with all their endeavours: they confess, therefore, that during all that period in which they were compelled to look to and depend upon other Lords, namely, the Egyptians and Syrians, besides God only, they could not emerge. Their prayers were without effect; their expectations were disappointed; and, being seized with pangs, like labouring women, before this time of deliverance for which they trusted solely in God, they had brought forth wind; they had produced nothing; they had done nothing which could at all conduce to their deliverance and salvation. See Vitringa, and Joseph. Antiq. lib. xii. cap. 3.

*Ver. 19. Thy dead men shall live, &c.]* *Thy dead shall live; my deceased, they shall rise: awake, &c.—But the earth shall cast forth, as an abortion, the deceased tyrants.* Lowth. The present period, which closes this confession, is excellent; wherein the pious declare, in the beginning of the deliverance which had happened to them, their certain hopes of perfect deliverance. The argument is manifestly their confession concerning the resurrection of the dead, whom they call *thy dead*; and the sentence is divided into two parts, an apostrophe being intermixed. In their confession the pious set forth their hope of the present and future state of things, in opposition to the state of the preceding period: which hope, as they declare in free and elegant words, so do they mutually congratulate each other upon it. The words are so conceived, that at the first appearance they seem to treat only of the resurrection of the dead, properly so called; and yet, according to their primary sense, they describe a mystical, metaphorical, or parabolical resurrection. The gradations in the prophet’s discourse should be observed; “*Thy dead*, says he, O God, *shall live, or revive;* “as many as have died in thy communion, and particularly in thy cause, (the confessors and martyrs of the true religion in all times) shall not perish, though they may seem to do so, but shall revive and live; first, in this land, where the justice of the cause for which they

sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.

20 ¶ Come, my people, enter thou into thy

“died, their eminent holiness and usefulness, shall be brought forth into light, shall be praised and celebrated with the most honourable remembrance of their names, in the restored, purified, and glorious state of the church; and then, at the end of time, when that first resurrection of their good names shall receive its full completion, they shall live and revive, with a full justification of their name and cause.” See Luke, xvii. 33. xx. 38. The chorus adds a *second* gradation, *my deceased*: In the first sense is understood the church, afflicted, distressed, as it was in the times of the Maccabees; in the mystical sense, the Christian church, oppressed with the most grievous persecutions, so that the hope of its restitution might seem almost desperate; but on this we shall enlarge when we come to the *Revelation*. It is added *thirdly*, *They shall arise*: To rise, is more than to revive. In the *Revelation*, xi. 11. *the two witnesses, being revived, stood upon their feet*: It was so under the Maccabees; the state not only revived, but rose. It re-flourished, and emerged more beautiful than it had hitherto appeared; see on ver. 15. The prophet subjoins an apostrophe, *Awake, and sing, ye that dwell in the dust*; which is to be understood as connected with the former part of the verse, and is an extatic rapture, such as our prophet abounds with, wherein the pious confessors express the fulness and assurance of their hope concerning their future deliverance. See Ephes. v. 14. In the second member of the sentence the prophet adds, *Thy dew is as the dew of herbs*; that is to say, the divine dew (the efficacious word of the divine command and blessing, or the life-giving Spirit of God) is like the dew which brings forth by his secret power the herbs out of the earth, or makes those which appear to be dead to revive; and thus the earth, moistened, as it were, and made fruitful by the dew of the divine blessing, should cast forth the dead, shut up within its bowels; nay, that very earth which used to absorb and swallow up men, should now, in its turn, at the time of the resurrection, as it were bring forth and produce men; for the idea in the last clause is taken from the delivery of women; (see ver. 17.) and is illustrated by Acts, ii. 24. The connection of the whole passage will plainly appear from the following sketch of it: “*Thy dead, O Lord, shall live, shall rise; nay, even my deceased, who, as it seemed, were in a state perfectly desperate; they shall awake and sing, who dwell in the dust*; BE-CAUSE *thy dew is as the dew of herbs*. The word and power of thy Spirit is a vivifying power, drawing forth from the bowels of the earth: and that earth, like a mother, bringing forth the dead committed to her for a certain time.” This prophecy, in the first place, refers, as we have observed, to the resurrection of the state under the Maccabees; and secondarily, to the resurrection of the Christian church from a state of great oppression; but the expressions in it are too strong to leave us in a moment’s doubt, that the prophet’s ideas and conceptions were taken from that resurrection whereof all men shall partake, especially from the final resurrection of the saints, which is the secondary but most important sense of all. See Vitringa.

Ver. 20, 21. Come, my people] These verses contain the

*conclusion* wherewith the prophet, speaking in the name of God, seals and confirms the hope of the pious—delivered in the preceding verses. He exhorts them to *hide themselves*, and patiently to await, amid the exercises of piety and devotion, *for a short time*, the completion of their promised deliverance, during the rage of a terrible persecution permitted by God, for the proving and purifying of his church; assured that God would most certainly repress and severely punish the fury of their enemies, the blood of the martyrs and confessors of the truth, which the earth might seem to have covered, being disclosed and avenged; while on the other hand, he would perfect the deliverance of his people, and increase his blessings of every kind upon them. The metaphor is taken from the raging of a mighty storm; during the continuance whereof, men fly into their houses, and shut their doors to secure themselves from its devastation.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The work of heaven is everlasting praise, and true believers delight to begin the service upon earth. We have here the song which, in the latter day, shall be sung in the land of Judah, the church of the first-born.

1. God hath prepared for his faithful people a city, his church; a *strong city*, which needs no human defences, when God himself is in the midst of her; and *his salvation her walls and bulwarks*. Note; They dwell in safety who have fled to Jesus, the city of refuge, and live by faith in him the Son of God who loved them, and gave himself for them.

2. He commands the gates to be opened for the admission of the righteous nation, that keepeth the word of his truth. All that in Jesus Christ the way, the truth, and the life, draw near to God, are now accepted as righteous, welcome to partake of the ordinances of his church below, and, continuing to cleave to him, shall have hereafter an entrance ministered to them abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our God and Saviour above.

3. The prophet exults in the security of those who thus receive and trust God’s promises. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee*; peace with God, peace of conscience, peace under every provocation, peace in every trial, peace that passeth all understanding, shall the soul enjoy, which is content to trust its all in the hands of Jesus. Lord, increase our faith! increase our peace!

4. He exhorts to exercise faith at all times in the Saviour, and under all difficulties to trust in his meritorious sacrifice for pardon and acceptance, in his grace for strength, in his promises for every future blessing; and he will never disappoint our hopes, for in the Lord Jah Jehovah is *everlasting strength*, or *the rock of ages*; he is able to save to the uttermost; while fixed on him, we shall be immoveable, since the rock of ages is our foundation. Note; Had we a heart to trust God more firmly, we should certainly find cause to praise him more frequently and joyfully.

2dly, We have,

1. The humiliation of the proud, and the destruction of the

chambers, and shut thy doors about thee : hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.

21 For behold, the LORD cometh out of

his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity : the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.

the lofty city, Babylon, now trod upon by those who before were oppressed by her ; or of spiritual Babylon, on which the poor persecuted saints of the Most High shall trample, when it is utterly laid waste before the Lord in the latter day.

2. The regard that God shews his people. *The way of the just is uprightness*, a strait path of uniform and steady obedience : or, as it may be read, *the way of the Lord to the just is evenness*, agreeable to his own perfections of wisdom, goodness, truth, and equity ; so that they have ever cause to address him as *thou most upright*, whose ways of providence and grace are perfectly pure, and transcendantly excellent ; *thou dost weigh, or mark out, or make even, the path of the just*, dost consider and approve it as good, or, removing every obstacle, enable him to walk in the paths of holiness.

3. The people of God profess their attendance on him, and desires after him. *In the way of thy judgments*, thy word, and ordinances, or thy chastisements which we have endured, *we have waited for thee*, patiently expecting to see thy salvation : *the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee* : in the midst of our heaviest afflictions, to thee our affections go forth ; we think upon thee, and derive support from the remembrance of thy grace, power, love, and faithfulness. *With my soul ardently have I desired thee in the night*, literally waking when others slept, or under the darkest dispensations of Providence ; *yea, with my spirit within me, will I seek thee early*, not forgetting him in prosperity ; but when the day returned, with the dawn meeting him with prayer and praise : *for when thy judgments are in the earth*, (those that shall be laid upon the sinners, and the followers of Antichrist) *the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness*, the justice of God in his judgments on others, and his afflictions on themselves ; and, profiting under them, will bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness, in penitence, faith, patience, love and obedience. *Note* ; (1.) They who wait for God in his ways shall assuredly meet him to their comfort. (2.) If our affections be not warm towards God, we need be jealous lest there be a rival in our hearts. (3.) The earlier in life we begin to seek God, the pleasanter shall we find his ways. (4.) Under our own corrections we must humble our souls, and from his visitations on others take warning ; then, however heavy the stroke, the issue will be to us righteousness and peace.

4. The impenitence of the wicked is observed as the prelude to their ruin. *Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness* ; providential mercies are no more effectual to lead him to repentance, than judgments to drive him : *in the land of uprightness*, where the most plentiful knowledge of gospel-truth is diffused, and the power of gospel-grace most eminently displayed, *will he deal unjustly*, persist in his iniquities, in opposition to every warning of God's word and ministers, *and will not behold the majesty of the Lord*, acknowledge his power, providence, and goodness : nor worship, serve, and obey him, as in duty

bound. *Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, or thy high hand, they will not see that hand in their mercies, or in the judgments visible in the earth, and hanging over their own heads, obstinately hardened, and wilfully shutting their eyes against conviction.* *Note* ; (1.) To dwell in a land of uprightness is an inestimable mercy ; and there to dwell in sin and darkness, where light and grace plentifully abound, will be aggravated guilt. (2.) Forgetfulness of God, and inattention to his word and works, are the ruin of men's souls. (3.) They who will not see are justly given up to judicial blindness.

5. Their destruction is near and sure. The judgments which they would not fear, they must feel. *They shall see the prosperity of God's people, and be ashamed for their envy : the zeal thou hast for thy people*, the Lord's regard for them, and his care to vindicate their wrongs, *yea, fire shall devour thine enemies*, the fire of present judgments, or the unquenchable fire which shall torment their bodies and souls in hell. Let the enemies of God's people hear and tremble !

3dly. We have,

1. The church's dependance on God, ascribing to his grace alone all the good which was found in her. *Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us*, whatever enemy seeks to trouble our repose ; *for thou also hast wrought all our works in us, or for us* ; whatever good is in our souls, thou, Lord, art alone the author of it ; whatever good we are the instruments of communicating to others, thy grace is alone to be acknowledged ; whatever blessings or comforts we receive, from thy hand alone they come.

2. The humbling confession and gracious purpose of God's people. *O Lord our God*, whose we are, and whom we ought and desire to serve, with shame we acknowledge *other lords besides thee have had dominion over us* ; either this is the confession of the Jews, bewailing their captivity and idolatries, or of the church, oppressed by the persecuting powers of Antichrist ; or, more generally, of every believer who laments the bondage of corruption, and earnestly longs for a deliverance from it, every vile affection being a tyrant ; or of the penitent burdened under the guilt of sin, and more or less led captive by Satan. *But now recovered by grace, we shall be enabled to say, by thee only*, by thy grace supported, and by thy power delivered, *will we make mention of thy name*, cleave alone to thee as our God and guide, and ascribe to thee the praise of all our salvation.

3. They triumph over their oppressors. *They are dead, they shall not live ; they are deceased, they shall not rise* ; either the Babylonish monarchs, whose kingdom never rose from its ruins, or the enemies of the church in general, whether Pagan, Papal, or Mahomedan, who will be finally destroyed, and no more oppress the people of God, *therefore, or because, thou hast visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish*, consigned them to eternal shame in the place of torment.

4. The great increase of the church is declared. *Thou hast increased*

## C H A P. XXVII.

*The care of God over his vineyard: his chastisements differ from judgments. The church of Jews and Gentiles.*

[Before Christ 715.]

**I**N that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish Leviathan

the piercing serpent; even Leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.

2 ¶ In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine.

3 I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it

*increased the nation, O Lord, thou hast increased the nation, either the Jewish nation by profelytes, or rather the Christian church, called the righteous nation, by numerous converts of Jews and Gentiles: and this is spoken as already done, because known of God in his infinite prescience. Thou art glorified in the salvation of thy people, and in the ruin of their enemies: thou hast removed it far unto all the ends of the earth, in a state of dispersion, from whence they are now delivered; or he had spread into every land the knowledge of his grace, and gathered a people for himself out of all nations.*

5. Before their restoration, a state of great trouble is foreseen and lamented; either of the Jews groaning under their captivity, or the church, under the perilous times which precede the destruction of Antichrist. *Lord, in trouble have they visited thee; this being the great use and benefit of afflictions, to bring us nearer to God, from whom prosperity is too apt to alienate our hearts: they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them; for this is the constant method of all God's people, in prayer and supplications to make their requests known unto him: nor are they, alas! in general ever so earnest and importunate, as when they see his chastisements bringing to remembrance their sins. Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs, which are the most acute and bitter, so have we been in thy sight, O Lord, in deep distress, and crying for deliverance: we have been with child, big with hopes; we have been in pain, travailing in prayers and tears, yet disappointed, and our hopes abortive, so long is our salvation delayed: we have brought forth wind, our prayers ineffectual and unanswered; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth, so as to regain our liberty, or, as Bishop Lowth reads it, Salvation is not wrought in the land, to deliver us from our enemies; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen, but continue to oppress the cause of godliness and truth. Note; (1.) God may, for wise ends, long suffer his own cause and people to be oppressed by wicked men. (2.) However long or severe our trials, we must continue to pray, and not faint. (3.) If we do so, we shall assuredly not be disappointed at the last. For,*

6. Christ answers his people's prayers. *Thy dead men shall live; spiritually, by the power of Jesus, the dead in sin shall be quickened, and in the latter day vast additions of living souls be made to the church; or it refers to the resurrection, when the dead in Christ shall rise first, and reign with him, together with my dead body shall they arise, as the bodies of many saints did, when Jesus himself arose, Matt. xxvii. 51—53. or as my dead body shall they arise, certainly, and as gloriously: awake, and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; awake at the gospel call, ye dead in sin; or awake from the dust of death, ye sleeping saints; arise to meet*

your Lord in the air, and join in songs of praise that never will have an end: *for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, thy spirit as effectual to quicken the souls and bodies of the spiritually and naturally dead, as the dew causes the herb to shoot that seemed dead in the ground, during the sleep of winter, and the earth shall cast out the dead; when, at the word of Jesus, they that are in their graves shall hear and live. Note; Whatever our afflictions here may be, if we have but a part in the resurrection of the just, we need not ask or wish for more.*

4thly, We have the conclusion of the former song.

1. Christ calls his people to a place of safety, when he is about to execute his wrath on the wicked. *Come my people, the endearing title of property and relation, and the assurance of safety; enter thou into thy chambers, where they may be safe; as Rahab when Jericho was taken, or the Israelites when the destroying angel passed through the land; and shut thy doors about thee, to be secure and private, to pour out the voice of prayer when danger threatens: bide thyself from the impending storm under the shadow of Almighty grace, as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast; the time will be momentary, for a short work will God make on the earth; his wrath, when it begins to consume the wicked, will quickly make an end of them.*

2. He goes forth to execute his judgments. *For behold, to the astonishment of the surprised world, the Lord cometh out of his place, in terrible majesty to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; be they never so great, never so numerous, their iniquity will receive a just recompence of reward: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain; the blood of saints and martyrs, from Abel to the last persecuted believer, shall then be brought to light; and, however secretly murders may have been committed, blood will cry for vengeance; or it may signify the immense carnage to be made in the battle of Armageddon, so that the earth shall not be able to drink up the blood. Rev. xiv. 20. xix. 17, 18. Note; The day is near when God will bring every secret thing into judgment. Let the guilty tremble.*

## C H A P. XXVII.

The latter part of the first discourse is contained in this chapter, wherein the prophet declares two great future events; the first is the destruction of the enemies of the church; ver. 1. the second the state of the delivered church, various attributes whereof are enumerated in order; as, first, its establishment in a state of purity, ver. 2.; secondly, the gracious care and providence of God towards it, after the destruction of the profane and hypocrites by his judgments, ver. 3—5.; thirdly, its progress and amplification, under the

night and day.

4 Fury is not in me: who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together.

5 Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me.

6 He shall cause them that come of Jacob

to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.

7 ¶ Hath he smitten him, as he smote those that smote him? or is he slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him?

8 In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it: he slayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind.

the divine grace, opposed to the severity which he had used towards its enemies, ver. 6—8.; fourthly, the purity of its doctrine and worship, after the destruction of the city, the mistress of superstition and idolatry, ver. 9—11: and lastly, the collection of its scattered members, of all the pious, dispersed through the world, ver. 12, 13.

Ver. 1. *In that day, &c.*] *In that day shall Jehovah punish with his sword; his well-tempered, and great, and strong sword; Leviathan the rigid serpent, and Leviathan the winding serpent: and shall slay the monster, that is in the sea.* Lowth. This prophecy may be connected either with the last verse of the preceding chapter, and that day, or time, refer to the time of indignation there spoken of; or you may connect it with the latter end of the 24th chapter, and particularly the 21st verse; for the destruction of the kings of the earth there mentioned, is the same with that of the animals in the present verse. There are three distinct creatures here spoken of: By the *leviathan, rigid or straight serpent*, the *crocodile* seems to be meant; by the *winding serpent*, the *dragon*, or large African serpent; and by the *monster in the sea*, most probably the *whale*. Vitringa thinks, that by the two first of these creatures are signified the kingdoms of Egypt and Assyria, as they existed after the times of Alexander the Great; and by the *whale* the kingdom of Arabia, and the other neighbouring nations, which were adversaries to the people of God; or that by these three animals are to be understood the persecutors and adversaries of the church, who should exist successively in the world, and be destroyed by the divine judgments. See his Note.

Ver. 2. *In that day, &c.*] The church, being purified by the fire of affliction, shall at that time, the prophet informs us, appear in its true character: fervent in faith, love, zeal, piety, it shall be beheld in all its full beauty and comeliness, which is the end and design of all its afflictions and trials. This he sets forth by an elegant emblem, declaring that God should have at that time a *vineyard of red, or fervent wine*; alluding to the church, glowing with the zeal of religion and red with the blood of martyrs: see Rev. vii. 14. This was the case of the church at the time of the Maccabees, and at the time of the apostles, after the Dioclesian persecution; but yet, says Vitringa, we expect something greater in the full completion of this prophecy.

Ver. 3—5. *I the Lord do keep it*] We have in these verses a fine testimony of the divine grace and clemency towards the church, of God's constant care and continued affection to it. This elegant period contains a declaration of God's gracious purpose toward his church, ver. 3. and the reason of it: the declaration of his gracious purpose,

considered under the emblem of a *vineyard of pure and red wine*, comprehends three benefits; the care of it, the watering of it, and the protection of it, which God himself promises to discharge. The other part of this period, which explains the reason of the divine purpose, begins with the words, *wrath or fury is not in me*: the meaning is, that God is not ill-disposed to his spiritual church, but, on the contrary, most tenderly inclined to it: If, therefore, at any time he may seem to have been severe against it, this is not the effect of *anger and fury*, but of love and true affection towards it; and the reasons of his providence are to be sought for from those more sublime causes which are principally approved by God, and in that way which tends chiefly to the manifestation of his glory. But, lest any one should take this for an absolute declaration, and so turn it into an argument of error, it is added, "But if at any time I exercise my wrath and fury tending to the destruction of men, that fury burneth not but against the thorns and briars, useless and hurtful wood; that is, the enemies and adversaries of myself and my people; the impenitent, unfruitful, barren, profane and hypocritical, who claim to themselves the name of the *vineyard*, that is to say, of the church, though they pertain not to it, and are the true objects of my punitive justice, that it may burn and consume them, and which cannot be delivered from my wrath, unless they seek by true repentance a protection in my favour, and are reconciled to me. God is here introduced as an enraged enemy, about to consume the thorns and the briars, that is, the impious transgressors of his law, unless they make peace with him." The clause will be more clearly understood if read thus: *Anger is not in me [towards my church]; yet, who would oppose thorns and briars against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together.* Ver. 5. *Unless he should take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; I say, that he may make peace with me.* Take hold of my strength, alludes to the laying hold of the horns of the altar. See 1 Kings, i. 50. and Vitringa.

Ver. 6—8. *He shall cause them, &c.*] Or, *In times to come, Jacob shall take root: Israel, &c.* ver. 7. *Hath he smitten him according to the stroke of those that smote him? &c.* ver. 8. *In measure, when thou didst send it [the stroke] forth, thou didst contend with her, when he blew with his stormy blast in the day of the east-wind.* If God had no anger, and no other reason for chastising his people, than to purify his *vineyard* from hypocrites, from thorns and briars,—this being effected by the divine judgment, it was necessary that his light, grace, and blessing should expand themselves in greater abundance over his church; which

9 By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this *is* all the fruit to take away his sin; when he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalk-stones that are beaten in sunder, the groves and images shall not stand up.

10 ¶ Yet the defenced city *shall be* desolate, and the habitation forsaken, and left like a wilderness: there shall the calf feed, and there shall he lie down, and consume the branches thereof.

11 When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be broken off: the women come, and set them on fire: for it *is* a people of no understanding: therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour.

12 ¶ And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the LORD shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel.

The prophet here foretels. The church, freed from its great affliction, he declares should shine with new splendor, and, long defiled and deformed, should shew all its glory with a remarkable produce and increase; to which end it had been preserved and purified: Yet some might think, that in the great affliction wherewith God had tried his church, he had treated her somewhat too severely. The prophet does not deny that God had acted with rigid justice; but he shews that this exercise of the divine justice had not exceeded the due bounds, and that there was the greatest difference between that *manner of punishment* which he had used toward his enemies, and the *reason of the punishment* which he had inflicted upon his church. His enemies had perished in the flame of his judgments; but he had preserved his church and faithful people for better things. This is the sense of the present period. Vitringa thinks that the meaning of the eighth verse is, that even in God's greatest judgments,—for instance, that upon Babylon,—he punishes his church differently from his enemies; for even at that time he did not omit due *measure or moderation* in the just and severe punishment of his people. He destroyed them not, but brought them back, chastised and purified, into their own country. This is that *measure or moderation* which God used toward his people at the time of the terribly-sounding *blast of the east-wind; the vehement wind*, which came from the desert. See chap. xxi. 1. The prophet here introduces the Babylonish judgment, that it might be compared with that of Epiphanes, and illustrated from it; for, although a similar *tempest* might be raised up at that time by the kings of the Syrians, it was not without the divine providence, to which all kings are subject: It was not with a design to destroy, but to purify the church, and in the end to overthrow the enemies of it. See Vitringa.

Ver. 9—11. *By this therefore, &c.*] *By this, &c.*—And this shall be all the fruit of removing his sin, that he make all the stones of the altar as chalkstones beaten asunder, &c. ver. 10. *because the defenced city [Babylon] shall be desolate; a mansion broken in pieces and left, &c.* Nothing can more commodiously answer to a flourishing state of the church, than the purity of the doctrine and worship of that church; whereby, being freed from superstition, idolatry, and the ridiculous ceremonies of false religion, and utterly renouncing those vices, it serves God in spirit and truth, with pure hands and an upright heart; and this is the attribute

which the prophet here claims to the delivered church; wherein he describes, *first*, metaphorically, or mystically, this attribute of pure doctrine and worship; ver. 9. *secondly*, he adds the reason and argument, drawn from the state of the *defenced city*, which was thought to be the chief mother of idolatry and superstition; namely, Babylon, the judgment upon whom is related properly in the 10th verse, and figuratively in the 11th. The meaning of the 9th verse is this: "Therefore, because all punishment and chastisement of the church has for its end the purification of the church, the iniquity of Jacob shall be purified *by this very thing*:" that is to say, Jacob shall obtain remission of sins, and the assurance of that benefit; and with remission of sins, a deliverance from the evils and calamities oppressing him: *And this shall be all the fruit of his sin removed*: that is to say, "This shall be an undoubted sign and argument of the total removal of his sins, namely, that he make all the stones of the altar, &c.—that he destroy all the monuments of idolatry, and hereby shew his attachment to the true God." In the next verse the reason for so doing is subjoined; *because the defenced city*, that Babylon which so confided in its idols, is become solitary, and utterly *destroyed*. It is remarkable that the Jews, after the Babylonish captivity, never fell into idolatry. The reader will easily observe, that Babylon is spoken of in the 11th verse metaphorically, under the image of a tree rooted up, withering, and fit only for the fire. Some understand by the *women* here, the Medes, who were an effeminate and luxurious people. This prophesy may refer not only to Babylon, but to the other famous and idolatrous cities, as Antioch and Persepolis, the latter of which particularly was set on fire by a woman. See Quint. Curt. lib. v. c. 7. and Vitringa.

Ver. 12. *And it shall come to pass, &c.*] This verse contains the 5th attribute of that time, in which God, raising his church as it were from the dead, and purifying it from idolatry and superstition, collected together by his powerful arm the dispersed members thereof. The prophet makes use of a peculiar expression, יַחֲבֹב *iachbot*, which we render *shall beat off*: It is metaphorical, and alludes not only to the beating or thrashing of wheat, but also to the beating of olives from the trees; and the meaning is, that God will beat or thrash the land and people of Syria, which kingdom extended as widely as the prophet here expresses; taking vengeance of the tyranny and perfidy which they had

13 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the

land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

had used towards his people; that by this means liberty might be granted to the Jewish nation of going to Jerusalem, and performing the duties of their religion. They should be gathered one by one like olives, which, being beaten by a vehement motion from the tree, are carefully gathered one by one and brought together. See Jer. iii. 14. and Vitringa.

*Ver. 13. And it shall come to pass in that day.*] Every one must observe, that the present verse is similar to that preceding, though it contains something greater and more expressive. The allusion is, probably, to the trumpets blown at the Jewish festivals; and the sense of the metaphor or emblem is, that it should come to pass that the dispersed Israelites, especially in Egypt and Assyria, should be most clearly informed and invited by some public edict or proclamation, or some other manifest sign of liberty, to return to their own country, freely to live there, and perform the rites of their religion at Jerusalem. The first completion of this prophecy must be fixed at the time of the Maccabees; see particularly 2 Mac. i. But certainly it has a much more extensive view, and refers to the times of the Messiah, and the great trumpet of the gospel, summoning to Jerusalem, as the seat of Jesus Christ, all the faithful, both Jews and Gentiles. See Hof. xi. 10, 11. and Matth. xxiv. 31. Some have thought, and with great appearance of truth, that this remarkable prophecy will then have its full completion, when, the conversion of the Gentiles being perfected, the Jews shall embrace the religion of Christ. See Rom. xi. 25. The latter part of the verse may be read, *And they shall come, who wander in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts who are in the land of Egypt; and they shall worship, &c.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. The execution of judgment on the great enemy of God's people, called Leviathan, the serpent, the dragon, either Antichrist, Rev. xii. 3. or Satan himself, or rather both. Though strong, furious, crafty, and poisonous, God's sword can reach him; and as he hath destroyed the persecuting powers of old, he will as surely destroy those that still rage, by the two-edged sword of his gospel expelling their poisonous errors, or by the sword of his judgments punishing them with everlasting destruction, Rev. xx. 20, 21.

2. In the day of vengeance on his enemies, his grace and mercy to his church will eminently appear, and she shall sing for joy over her persecutors fallen, and the peace and comfort of the faithful shall be everlastingly restored, Rev. xv. 1—4. xix. 1—7.

(1.) The church is represented as a *vineyard of red wine*, a people ingrafted on Christ the living vine, and thence enabled to bring forth the choicest fruits of faith and holiness. *Let the Lord do keep it*; though his church lies in the midst of a howling wilderness, where wicked men, more savage than beasts of prey, roam continually, and threaten to break through and spoil, yet it is safe under his protection, and

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flourishing under his care: *I will water it* with the dew of heavenly influences *every moment*, for every moment we need his gracious help; *lest any hurt it*, or *lest he visit it*, the enemy of souls, intent to deceive and destroy; *I will keep it night and day*, in prosperity and adversity, at all times, amidst every danger; he that slumbereth not, neither sleepeth, will preserve all those souls which live by faith on him. *Note*; The more we know of the riches and fulness of the divine promises, the more will our hearts be filled with thankfulness, and our lips with praise.

(2.) The people of God, as such, are assured of his favour. *Fury is not in me*; however terrible to his enemies, to the faithful God is all love, and their iniquities are cancelled by redeeming blood; no wrath remains against them, even their chastisements are the rod of mercy: *who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together*, meaning either, that should he contend with them for their sins, his own people would be but as briers and thorns before the consuming fire without the atoning Blood; or rather, that when hypocrites and false teachers, like briers and thorns, spring up to trouble his people, he would step into his vineyard as a man of war, and quickly destroy and burn them up.

(3.) God directs them how to preserve an abiding sense of his regard to them. *Or let him take hold of my strength*; in times when his corrections are on his people, they need not be terrified, but apply to that Almighty Saviour the strength of God, who is the everliving and all-prevailing advocate for faithful believers; *that he may make peace with me*, by pleading the Blood which he once shed for the redemption of the world; *and he shall make peace with me*; God, for his sake, will be perfectly pacified toward the believing soul, and comfort it with the confidence of his mercy.

(4.) The church shall have a great increase. *He shall cause them that come of Jacob*, the spiritual Israel of God, *to take root*, to be established and to spread their branches on every side; especially in the latter day of gospel-truth, when *Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit*, as in the days of the Apostles, Col. i. 6. and as it shall be more abundantly fulfilled hereafter.

2dly, Though God had intimated that sometimes afflictions would fall upon his faithful people, yet very different would his dealings with them be from his judgments on their enemies.

1. Respecting the measure of them. Though he should smite them, yet not as he smote those that smote him, his strokes on his people would be mitigated; and, however rough the wind blew for a season, he would say, Peace, be still. But their enemies would be utterly consumed, their fortresses destroyed, their country a wilderness, where cattle would feed. Like a withered tree they would be condemned to the flames; and this in just judgment, because they are a *people of no understanding*; and, being ungrateful and disobedient to their Maker, receive the reward

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of

## C H A P. XXVIII.

*The prophet threateneth Ephraim for their pride and drunkenness. The faithful residue shall be advanced in the kingdom of Christ: he rebuketh their error, their untowardness to learn, and their security. Christ the sure foundation is promised. Their security shall be tried. They are incited to the consideration of God's discreet providence.*

[Before Christ 725.]

**W**OE to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glo-

rious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine!

2 Behold, the LORD hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand.

3 The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet:

of their deeds in utter destruction. This may primarily refer to the Jewish nation and their foes, but it has a more enlarged view to all the people of God and their enemies. *Note*; (1.) If we be God's children, we shall, because we need it, feel his gracious rod. (2.) Though involved in the same outward calamities, there is at all times a wide difference between those who are corrected in mercy, and those who suffer in wrath. (3.) They who obstinately reject God's warnings may expect in a judgment-day no mercy.

2. The end that God proposed in correcting his people, was their holiness and salvation. *By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin*; and a gracious end this is, for which every faithful soul has reason to bless God, who can say, before I was afflicted I went astray. The particular sin here to be removed is idolatry: *when he maketh all the stones of the altar, erected for idol-worship, 2 Kings, xvi. 10—12. as chalk-stones that are beaten in sunder, the groves and images shall not stand up.* And after the captivity the Jews were so thoroughly cured of that idolatry, to which before they were so prone, that the least traces of it no longer appeared among them. *Note*; It is a blessed symptom for good, when our sin, our bosom sin, which did most easily beset us, is thus radically destroyed.

3. When God hath, for their good, corrected his faithful people, he will gather them together wherever dispersed, and however distressed. *It shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall beat off, and collect his faithful ones, as fruits to be laid up in store, or as corn separated from the chaff, from the channel of the river (Euphrates) unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, every soul that cleaves by faith to Jehovah, O ye children of Israel. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, which, if referred literally to the Jewish people, signifies the proclamation of Cyrus; by which they were restored to their own land from all places of their dispersion; but rather it refers to the collection of the faithful Israel of God, even those who yield to be saved by grace, and by the means of the trumpet of the everlasting Gospel, recovering those who were ready to perish, and the outcasts, like the wretched in Ezekiel, lying in their blood; outcasts from God's church, and perishing in their sins, till quickened and restored by the power of divine grace through the word of the Gospel, and brought to join the holy worship of the saints in God's church on earth, and to prepare for the everlasting service of God in glory.* *Note*, (1.) When-

ever the Gospel trumpet is blown, they who know the joyful sound will assemble thither. (2.) The Gospel is to the lost the trump of Jubilee, glad tidings of great joy. (3.) It is a mercy when we have liberty to worship God, and a greater to delight in the service, and to say of God's courts, Here would I dwell for ever.

## C H A P. XXVIII.

THE second discourse of the third book of Isaiah's prophecies, is contained in the six following chapters: for the general analysis we refer to the first note on the 24th chapter. Vitringa supposes that the whole discourse was delivered before the expedition of Sennacherib, and on occasion of some solemn embassy sent to Egypt, to implore the help of the Egyptians against the Assyrian. The parts of the first section contained in this chapter are four; *first*, we have a reproof of the Ephraimites and of the Jews, blinded by the divine judgment, looking round for human aid instead of the divine; which contains a denunciation of the destruction of Samaria and Jerusalem, ver. 1—4. *Secondly*, a promise of the restoration of the state, ver. 5, 6. *Thirdly*, a new reproof of the same kind of men, who, not long before the time of the manifestation of the Messiah, should corrupt the doctrine of religion, and by their light carnal counsels consult for their safety and security, ver. 7—22. And *fourthly*, a defence of the divine œconomy in the administration of the church, under a figure of a husbandman, diligently observing his seasons, ver. 23—29. The *first part* is two-fold, setting forth the fault of the Ephraimites, truly or mystically so called, ver. 1. and their punishment, ver. 2—4. The *second* describes the beauty and glory of the faithful, ver. 5, 6. The *third part* proceeds in nearly the same manner as the *first*. In the first place, the corrupters of true religion, not long before the appearance of the Son of God, are described in lively colours, ver. 7—10. Then the punishment ordained for these men is set forth at large: *first*, spiritual, ver. 11—13. then temporal and external, ver. 14—22. In describing which latter punishment the prophet proceeds in such a manner, as, by appealing to the authors of those corrupt counsels, to place their crime before their eyes, and to convince them of it: ver. 14, 15. About to denounce the punishment, he premises, that notwithstanding their vices, God would not neglect, at that very time, to fulfil his great promise concerning the Messiah, ver. 16. while he does not so much denounce, as foretel, the great evils and calamities which should fall upon



4 And the glorious beauty which *is* on the head of the fat valley shall be a fading flower, and as the hasty fruit before the summer; which *when* he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up.

5 ¶ In that day shall the LORD of Hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people,

6 And for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them

that turn the battle to the gate.

7 ¶ But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.

8 For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.

upon the incredulous, and the despisers of this salvation, ver. 17—22. The fourth part, which illustrates the economy of God under the parable of a husbandman, contains an exordium demanding attention, ver. 23. and the parable itself, ver. 24—29. Vitringa.

Ver. 1. *Woe to the crown of pride*] Or, *Woe unto the crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim, and to the fading flower of their most glorious beauty, which is upon the head, &c.* By the *crown of pride of the drunkards, &c.* Samaria is primarily to be understood, which is situate, as Maundrell expresses it in words which serve well to elucidate the prophet, upon a long mount of an oval figure, having first a fruitful valley, and then a ring or crown of hills running round about it. Journey from Aleppo, p. 59. The prophet alludes to the crown of flowers worn by the ancients in their drinking-matches. This image is not unfrequently made use of by the prophets to convey the strongest idea of the universal depravity and folly of the nation. In this passage the prophet undertakes to prove the folly of the Ephraimites in their explication of the law; and for that purpose compares the false and delusive professors of this branch of knowledge, to a club of drunkards; introducing JEHOVAH himself, in order to heighten his satire upon drunkenness, as speaking to them in a language to which they are no strangers. This, says Vitringa, is the primary sense of the words; but in an oblique sense they are to be referred to the Jews, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, imitating the foolish proceedings of the Ephraimites, hypocrites, profane, neglectful of God, seeking human aid, (that of the Egyptians we may suppose,) and falling under the same judgment of spiritual drunkenness; whose *crown of pride* was Jerusalem, and *the fading flower of their most glorious beauty*, the temple, the glory of their nation, on the top of the fruitful valley which divided mount Moriah from mount Olivet.

Ver. 2—4. *Behold, the Lord, &c.*] The punishment upon Ephraim is contained in these verses, and consists of three gradations; the first in the second verse; the meaning whereof literally is, that God has ready at his command a potent prince, whom he will send against a hypocritical people, its kings, leaders, elders, and teachers, that like a horrid winter-storm he may overflow, overwhelm, and utterly destroy them. The image here used is frequent with the prophets to represent the rapid conquest of an enemy. See ch. viii. 7. xxv. 4. Ezek. xiii. 13. This verse would be rendered more properly, *Behold the mighty one, the exceedingly strong one! Like a storm of hail, like a destructive*

*tempest; like a rapid flood of mighty waters pouring down: he shall dash them to the ground with his hand [or with great violence.]* See Bishop Lowth. The second gradation is, ver. 3. that the *proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim* should be trodden under feet; that is, the glory wherein they most boasted should be utterly contemned and spoiled; and the third in ver. 4. that the city or cities here spoken of should be utterly and entirely destroyed and consumed; for this is the meaning of the metaphor. The verse should be rendered, *And the fading flower of the beauty of her ornament, which is upon the head of the fat valley, shall be as the early-ripe fruit before the autumn, &c.* The first ripe figs were esteemed very delicious, which the prophet expresses strongly by saying, *that he who plucketh them swalloweth them up, even while they are in his hand.* See Jer. xxiv. 2. Mic. vii. 1. The prophet in these verses alludes to the destruction of Samaria by the Assyrians, and of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. See Vitringa.

Ver. 5, 6. *In that day*] These verses contain a promise of the preservation of the faithful, and of the restoration and defence of the state. See chap. iv. 2. The meaning is, that after the return from the Babylonish captivity God would more clearly reveal himself to his people, and bestow upon them those spiritual blessings reserved for the times of the Messiah. Compare Jer. xxxi. 1. xxx. 22. and Ezek. xxxvi. 28. The latter clause of the 6th verse seems to refer more particularly to the heroic Maccabees. See Zech. ix. 13. x. 5, 6. Justin, speaking of the state of the Jewish nation, restored by the Maccabees, says, that their power was such, as to submit to no king of the Macedonians after Demetrius; but, subject to their own rulers, they subdued Syria in many battles. See Hist. lib. xxxvi. c. 1.

Ver. 7, 8. *But they also have erred, &c.*] *But they also stagger with wine, and reel with strong drink: the priest and the prophet stagger through strong drink; they are drowned in wine; they reel with strong drink, &c.* We have observed that a new set of men are here introduced, who are shewn to be guilty of the same vice with the Ephraimites above-mentioned; that is to say, of corrupting religion and judgment. It is plain that the *priests* and *prophets*, the teachers, scribes, judges, and elders of the people of God, or in general the Pharisees and Sadducees, are here meant; who are condemned, not of drunkenness properly speaking, but of figurative drunkenness; that is, the inculcating corrupt doctrine, different from the tradition of their fathers, and from sound reason; and in their public judg-

9 ¶ Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? *them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts:*

10 For precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little:

11 For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.

12 To whom he said, *This is* the rest *wherewith* ye may cause the weary to rest; and *this is* the refreshing: yet they would not hear.

13 But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little: that they might go,

and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

14 ¶ Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men that rule this people which *is* in Jerusalem.

15 Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:

16 ¶ Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

ments concerning religion and law, and in their counsels concerning the safety and preservation of the state, wandering far from sober judgment and a sound mind. See ver. 9. The history of the Pharisees and Sadducees sufficiently explains this prophesy.

Ver. 9, 1. *Whom shall he teach knowledge?*] This period, though different in words, is the same in sense with that preceding. The meaning is, that the teachers, priests, and elders of the people, whose duty it was to maintain the purity and integrity of the public doctrine and counsels, had deviated so far from the path of right, that they were entirely ignorant with respect to the true doctrine of salvation, which was to be found in the ancient patriarchal and Mosaic system; they could neither perceive, digest, nor teach it: that the scholastic doctrine of that time here referred to was a doctrine accommodated to a puerile, *childish understanding*, as was that of the Pharisees; not *masculine, solid*, well-connected, such as ought to be the doctrine of true religion, which should satisfy a man of a strong and well-exercised mind; but that it consisted of precepts, commended indeed under the specious name of ancient traditions, but entirely independent, and by no means connected together. The reader will observe the italics in these verses, which should be omitted in the perusal, as they destroy the sense: the original of the last verse is remarkably strong and expressive, particularly of the trifling and false doctrine of the Pharisees. See Vitringa, and Origen against Celsus, lib. ii. p. 60.

Ver. 11—13. *For with stammering lips, &c.*] Instead of *refreshing*, in ver. 12. we may read, *happy place*; and the 13th may be rendered, *But the word of the Lord shall be unto them,—that they may go, &c.* These verses contain the spiritual punishment consequent upon the fault before specified. When the teachers of the church, says Vitringa, little regard the wholesome doctrine of the word of God, but follow their own simple and trifling ideas, God interposes with his judgment, and permits them to be alienated more and more from the sound and salutary doctrine of faith, which alone brings comfort to the conscience; and to be delivered up to the vanity of their own

understandings, to the destruction of their souls; an example whereof the prophet here proposes in the Pharisees, but which is often verified among Christians themselves, so called. *God had said* to this people, (that is to say, those of Jerusalem, as appears from ver. 14.) *This is the rest, &c.* that is, the doctrine of grace and remission of sins through Jesus Christ: See Matt. xi. 28. *But they would not hear; they* (the Pharisees and teachers of those times) *rejected the counsel of God towards themselves; their sins* therefore, as it is usual with the divine justice, were turned into their punishment, as is expressed metaphorically in the 11th verse, and properly in the 13th; the meaning whereof is, that as the Pharisees and teachers of those times preferred their own blind and foolish doctrines to the pure word of grace, God would give them up to the blindness and belief of those doctrines; and hence their Talmuds, Cabбалas, and all the foolishness and profaneness of those doctrines which they had preferred to the genuine truths of the Gospel, and which have caused all those evils denounced at the latter end of the 13th verse. See chap. viii. 14, 15. Concerning the more elevated and mystical sense which the apostle has given to the words of the 11th verse, we shall speak when we come to 1 Cor. xiv. 21. In the mean time we refer to Vitringa.

Ver. 14, 15. *Wherefore, hear the word of the Lord, &c.*] The prophet, about to describe the temporal and external punishment in these verses, addresses the teachers and elders of the people, and in a strong manner convicts them of their iniquity. By *death* and *hell* are understood those powerful princes with whom the unbelieving Jews had entered into a covenant, having cast off their dependance upon God; but more particularly the Romans under whose subjection alone they declared themselves when they refused Christ for their king: *We have no king but Cæsar*, say they; John, xix. 15. See Dan. vii. 17.

Ver. 16. *Behold, I lay in Zion, &c.*] Or, *Behold, I am he who layeth for a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tried stone, a corner stone, precious, a sure foundation, &c.* The prophet seemed immediately about to declare the temporal punishment determined for the Jewish elders; and indeed he does

17 ¶ Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place.

18 And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.

19 From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report.

20 For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it.

21 For the LORD shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act.

22 Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong: for I have heard from the Lord God of Hosts a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth.

does so, but in such a manner as to declare the counsel of God concerning the manner of executing this judgment, and the whole reason and order of its execution. He teaches therefore, in the first place, to refute the boasting of the wicked concerning the *false foundation* of their confidence; that God was now prepared to lay a better and more certain foundation of confidence for the true believers, which should sustain the great edifice of his church; a foundation with every property necessary to sustain the church; and that he would at length produce that *foundation-stone*, upon which the believers of all times had fixed their eyes; in which foundation whoever should perseveringly place his confidence, he should never fail; and this foundation, for the consolation of the pious, the prophet contradistinguishes, and opposes to the false foundation wherein the wicked placed their trust. The connection is this: "Therefore—because you so impiously suppose that there is no foundation for the church, no support but such as carnal wisdom may supply;—Behold, I, the powerful and faithful God, will at this time fulfil my promises, and lay in Sion that stone of the Great Redeemer, in whom whosoever believeth shall not be confounded." See Amos, ix. 11. There is no doubt of the reference of this passage to the Messiah; who was a *tried stone* intimately known and explored by his Father; and who is also a *trying stone*, the touch-stone of the faith and truth of his people: *A corner-stone; he*, in whom all the parts of the spiritual building are united, Jews and Gentiles being made one in him. See Ephes. ii. 16. *A precious and a sure foundation*, in whom are found all the treasures of grace; who is that only foundation, that rock, whereon his church is firmly built; on whom his faithful people wholly depend; and against which the gates of hell shall never prevail. See 1 Cor. iii. 11. Matt. xvi. 18. It is added, *He that believeth shall not make haste*; which the LXX render, *shall not be ashamed*. St. Peter and St. Paul have both followed this rendering; and Vitringa thinks that the idea of *being ashamed*, is comprized in the Hebrew word *יָחִיֵּב* *iachib* which we render *shall not make haste*; i. e. He shall not be in that perturbed, unsettled state of mind, which arises from doubt and uncertainty: "He shall *pass his soul in patience*, (according to a similar expression in scripture; Luke, xxi. 19. compared

"with Rom. viii. 25.) and have none of those uneasy fears and sensations of shame and chagrin arising from the "apprehension of disappointment." What a blessing it is, to be always preserved in such a spirit!

Ver. 17—22. *Judgment also will I lay to the line*] The prophet, having provided for the safety of those who put their trust in God, prepares himself to denounce the judgments ready for the profane and hypocritical *scorners of Jerusalem*, who boasted that they had made a *covenant with death and with hell*, renouncing all hope of salvation from God; and the denunciation of this judgment is comprehended in various articles, the first whereof is in the 17th verse, wherein God testifies that he will not spare them, but proceed with them according to the strict line of justice and severity; and that it should come to pass that those formidable people themselves, with whom they had made a covenant, should bring upon them a total and sweeping destruction: see ver. 2. And who knows not how exactly this was fulfilled by the Romans? The next article is comprized ver. 18—20. The meaning whereof is, that the covenant with the Romans, wherein they had placed so much confidence, should be broken and disannulled; and they should be exposed to the vengeance and power of the Romans, to which, while deprived of the divine aid, they were themselves utterly unequal: wherefore it should come to pass that this overflowing scourge should entirely destroy them. The sense of the metaphorical expressions in the 20th verse is, that the Jews, having broken their covenant with the Romans, should be most certainly overwhelmed by this overflowing scourge, because they were utterly unequal to the Romans, when deprived of the divine aid. It was that aid alone which could supply their defect; but God being determined to hide his face from them, and to desert them utterly, the *bed* would be *too short* for them to *stretch themselves upon*, and the *covering too narrow* for them to *wrap themselves in*: their own powers and abilities would be insufficient to their protection and defence. The emblem, chap. xxxiii. 23. is of similar elegance. Spiritually understood, this figure may be applied to a man seeking to be justified by his own righteousness, without applying to the righteousness which is by faith: he will find the *bed* of his own works and merits too short, and the *covering too*

23 ¶ Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech.

24 Doth the plowman plow all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of his ground?

25 When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat, and the appointed barley, and the rye, in their place?

26 For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him.

27 For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart-wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod.

28 Bread *corn* is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it *with* the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it *with* his horsemen.

29 This also cometh forth from the LORD of Hosts, *which* is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.

too narrow. The third article is contained in the 21st verse, to which is added an admonition in the 22d. The meaning of the 21st is, that God, as if moved with severe indignation, would at this time fearfully display his judgments, to destroy his obstinate and professed enemies, in the same manner as he destroyed the kings of Canaan, (see Josh. x. 11.) and as the Philistines were destroyed at mount Perazim. See 2 Sam. v. 20—25. chap. xxx. 30, 31. The destruction of the Jewish common-wealth is called the Lord's *strange work*; and surely with great propriety; for nothing could be more singular and wonderful than that God should so entirely reject his people, and so fearfully destroy their temple and city. The 22d verse, containing the admonition to the *scorners*, (see ver. 14.) and exhorting them to fly from the wrath to come, would be better understood if rendered thus: *Now therefore, do not exercise your scorning any more, lest your bands be made stronger*; [that you may avoid, if not the whole, yet a part of the divine wrath.] *For I have heard what is decreed and precisely determined by the Lord God of Hosts against the whole land.* The last words are rendered by Bishop Lowth, *For a full and decisive decree have I heard from the Lord JEHOVAH, God of Hosts, on the whole land.* See Vitringa.

Ver. 23—29. *Give ye ear, &c.*] We have here the fourth member of this section, in which this severe judgment of God denounced in the preceding verses, is defended by a parable taken from agriculture, wherein the prophet represents allegorically the intentions and method of the divine judgments; asserting that God acts in different ways, but at the same time with the greatest wisdom in punishing the wicked: *laying judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet*, and weighing with the greatest exactness the differences of time, of men, and of things, together with every necessity for severity or mercy. These are represented under a continued allegory, borrowed from agriculture and threshing; which images are in a manner appropriated and consecrated to this topic, and have been already explained in the course of the work. See Bishop Lowth's 10th Prelection, and Vitringa; who has very copiously elucidated this parable. Bishop Lowth reads ver. 28. *The bread-corn* [is beaten out] *with the threshing-wain.* *But not for ever will he continue thus to thresh it; nor to vex it with the wheel of his wain; nor to bruise it with the hoofs of his cattle.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Though judgments are denounced on all God's enemies, yet they will first begin at the house of God, and the sinners in Zion must feel the heaviest scourge. Such is the woe pronounced here on Ephraim, and Samaria the capital of the ten revolted tribes.

1. The sins charged upon them are pride and drunkenness. Their country being rich and fertile, abundance swelled their vain hearts, and sensual appetite abused their distinguished mercies. Carousing at the festal board, their heads with garlands crowned, they proudly defied sorrow, fearless of the wrath they provoked. *Note*; (1.) Pride on God's gifts is the sure way to provoke him to deprive us of them. (2.) A drunkard is a monster in nature; and he who thus basely chooses to degrade himself into a brute justly deserves to be made a companion of devils.

2. Heavy is the curse which the prophet is commissioned to pronounce on these proud drunkards. As they gave up their senses to the base servitude of lust, and drowned their reason in excess, in just judgment they should be delivered to their foes. The king of Assyria, Salmanezer, like a resistless hail-storm, or winter's flood, should bear down all before him. *The crown of pride*, their king and his mighty men, or Samaria the metropolis, or *the crowns* of garlands on the drunkard's head, when they were surprised in this defenceless and intoxicated state, he would cast down, and would tread the drunkards under his feet, reducing them to a state of most abject wretchedness. Their *glorious beauty*, their numerous inhabitants, or their country decked with vineyards, and valleys thick with corn, shall fade as quickly as the flower's bloom departs, and be devoured by the hosts of Assyria as greedily as the first ripe fruit; so that nothing but desolation should be seen. *Note*; (1.) They who give the reins to their appetites, and to drunkenness especially, are voluntary slaves, and court a servitude most wretched even now; issuing at present in the ruin of their health, fortune, and families, and bringing them hastily to that place of torment where a drop of water will be fought in vain to cool a flaming tongue. (2.) God's ministers must denounce his woes against men's sins freely and plainly. (3.) Whatever the sinner here is proud of, it is but a fading flower, and at death at farthest, if not before, will vanish.

3. In the midst of the desolations of Ephraim, Judah and Benjamin, the residue of God's people, have a gracious promise made to them. *The Lord shall be a crown*

## C H A P. XXIX.

*God's heavy judgment upon Jerusalem. The insatiableness of her enemies. The senselessness and deep hypocrisy of the Jews. A promise of sanctification to the godly.*

[Before Christ 712.]

**W**OE to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt! add ye year to year;

of glory and a diadem of beauty to them, eminently distinguishing, and protecting them from the power of the Assyrians, under Hezekiah, a type of that son of David, in whom the offices of King and Priest should be united: and for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, which God would bestow on the king and his magistrates, to execute righteous judgment, which is the great happiness of every state; and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate, enduing their generals and soldiers with courage to vanquish their enemies, and pursue them to the gates of their city. *Note;* (1.) Christ is his faithful people's glory, and in his wisdom, righteousness, and strength, they are made more than conquerors over all their enemies. (2.) Whatever the Lord is to us, or does for us, we are bound to ascribe the praise of all to him.

4. A heavy complaint is lodged against Judah for her sins. In her were found the sins of Israel, and the same drunkenness led them astray from God. Yea, so generally had their scandalous sins spread, that priest, prophet, and people were alike infected with them. The consequence of which was, that the pretended prophet uttered the fancies of his inflamed brains for visions, deceiving, and being deceived; the priests, instead of the conscientious discharge of their office, mistook God's law, misinterpreted his oracles, and led their hearers into fatal errors: or on the bench decided wrong, to the great injury of truth and justice. Yea, so common and infamous was their drunkenness, that every table was full of vomit, and no place clean; a scene as loathsome (if possible) in the eyes of sober men, as it is detestable in the sight of God. *Note;* Drunkenness is vile and brutish in every man; but in a priest, a minister of the sanctuary, what words can express the infamy, impiety, and scandalousness of the crime!

2dly, Drunkenness necessarily brought stupidity upon their minds, and steeled them against all the warnings of God.

1. In vain were all the teachings of the prophets, solicitous as they were to make them understand; waiting upon them with patient perseverance, and daily inculcating their lessons; and plainly, and affectionately withal, shewing them how nearly they were interested in the matter, as being the only way for them to obtain deliverance from the threatened evils, or pardon and refreshing to their guilty consciences. Yet as soon might a child at the breast be taught, so stupidified were they with their drunkenness, and so obstinate, they would not hear; though the word was ever sounding in their ears, it never reached their hearts; and they seem to have turned it into ridicule, repeating it after the prophet in mockery, צו לצו קו לקו *Tsav la'vov, kav lakav*, or at their drunken feasts jesting

let them kill sacrifices:

2 Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow: and it shall be unto me as Ariel.

3 And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee.

with the most sacred words of scripture. *Note;* (1.) God condescends to teach us as babes; his word is the sincere milk; and, as a nurse cherishes her children, his ministers are sent to wait upon us with unwearied patience. (2.) Children's minds must not be over-burthened; a little, as they are able to receive it, will be the most profitable instruction. (3.) There is rest for the weary in Jesus, and refreshing for the miserable: it argues our folly to be as great as our wickedness, to reject our own mercies, and refuse his calls to come to him, that we may find rest to our souls. (4.) Many hear the word of God, whose hearts continue impenetrable; yea, they will not understand, and none so blind as these. (5.) The last step of hardened wickedness is making a jest of things sacred.

2. In just judgment God gives them up to the ruin they have chosen. *With stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people*, when foreign armies shall waste their country; so that their destruction was determined; that they might go and fall backward and be broken, and snared, and taken, as the punishment of their apostasy from God, first given up to the Babylonians, and at last their country utterly destroyed by the Romans. *Note;* They who will not attend to God's calls to repentance, will hear his terrible voice of judgment, when their ruin is past recovery.

3dly, The prophecy beginning at the 14th verse some apply to the desolation of Judæa by the Assyrians; but it seems to belong especially to the Jews in Christ's day, and the desolations which the Romans shortly after brought upon them.

1. The scornful men who rejected the prophetic admonition, too great to take rebuke, and infatuated to their ruined, boasted themselves secure. The death and hell which the prophet threatened, they feared not: they thought themselves as safe as if they had made a compact with the grave, and were confident, whatever overflowing scourge passed through the land, it would not come to them; making lies their refuge, and hiding themselves under falsehood, they trusted in the lying prophets who encouraged them, or in their own strength, wealth, and policy, to overcome or over-reach their adversaries. By the overflowing scourge, the Roman army seems intended, against which they thought themselves safe, but found, too late, their sad delusion. *Note;* (1.) When we are in covenant with God through a Redeemer, and at peace with him through the blood of sprinkling; then, and only then, have we made a covenant with death, and cannot be hurt thereby. (2.) Vain confidence buoys up sinners to the last, but there will then be found a lie in their right hand.

2. The prophet admonishes them where alone they can safely

4 And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out

safely place their confidence. *Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, the Lord Jesus Christ, other foundation than whom no man can lay; a stone, a rock, firm, and immovable; a tried stone, who has been proved the sure support of his saints in every age; or a stone of trial, by whom men's states are discovered, and their characters determined; a precious corner-stone, supporting the whole spiritual building, and inestimably prized by every believer who knows the value of such a Redeemer; a sure foundation, which will stand for eternity, and on which the faithful may safely trust body and soul: he that believeth shall not make haste, but under every trial patiently wait the Lord's leisure; and thus never will be confounded, or ashamed, as it is rendered, 1 Pet. xi. 6. for he has never failed those who trusted him, and never can or will disappoint the hopes of those who perseveringly rely upon him.*

3. He warns them of the folly, sin, and danger of their conduct, in trusting on lying vanities. For when the Lord shall lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, as builders to prove their work straight, their ways will be found perverse, and their judgment ensue; then their vain hopes shall fail, and the hail-storm sweep away their refuge of lies. The army of the enemy shall as easily and utterly overwhelm them, their lying prophets, their riches and temple together, or whatever else they trust in, as the waters of the deluge did the sinners of old. Then their covenant with death would be proved a delusion; and the sword of the Chaldeans, or rather of the Romans, as an overflowing scourge, pass through, and as mire in the streets they should be trodden down. *From the time that it goeth forth, neither policy nor power will be able to oppose it; it shall take you as prisoners for captivity, or seize you as criminals for the sword; and this continually and thoroughly, till God's judgments are executed. Morning by morning, shall it pass over, by day and by night, without interruption the siege would be carried on, and the devastations increase; and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report, so terrible would the tidings be which those who fled into Jerusalem should carry of the ravages of the Chaldean or Roman army. For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it; which either describes the insufficiency of their projects, and the uncomfortableness of their state, when their beds would give them no repose; or the case of Jerusalem, crowded with those who fled thither, whose useless number increased the miseries of the besieged. For the Lord shall rise up as in mount Perazim, and against his arm resistance is vain; he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon; two eminent instances wherein he displayed his terrible majesty against his enemies, 2 Sam. v. 20. 1 Chron. xiv. 11. Josh. x. 10—13. that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act; he used to fight for them, but now is turned to be their enemy, and their fall is sure. Note; (1.) If God lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, who can stand, or bear the scrutiny? (2.) It is the folly of the self-righteous and the hypocrite*

that they cry peace, when there is no peace. (3.) If sinners cannot bear the report of God's terrors without vexation, nor hear of hell, and torments, and eternal despair, without commotion, how will they endure them? (4.) They who think their moral duties will yield them a covering in the day of God, and seek repose in their own righteousnesses, will find the bed too short, the covering too narrow, and perish in their own deceivings. (5.) Vengeance is God's strange work; he delighteth not in the death of a sinner.

4. The whole is pressed upon their consciences for their conviction and reformation. *Now therefore, to-day, whilst it is called to-day, and yet there is mercy, be ye not mockers, despising these divine notices; lest your hands be made strong, and aggravated guilt provoke a heavier judgment: for I have heard from the Lord of Hosts, who cannot lie, and is able to make good his word, a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth, or on the land of Judæa; it shall be swept as with the besom of destruction. See Dan. ix. 27. Note; (1.) It is merciful in God to give sinners warning; he leaves them then without excuse. (2.) Mockers will be strangely disappointed, when the terrors which they despised seize them, and the warnings that they ridiculed are proved dreadful realities.*

4thly, The prophet, in God's name, calls on them for attention, and gives them a parable of warning.

1. He bids them regard the husbandman; what various methods he uses; how prudently he plows and sows, casting the seed into the proper soil, and in the appointed season; and when he has gathered his fruits, how wisely he manages them, using more force with the seeds which are more firm and difficult to be beat out of the ear, and less with such as would be liable to be bruised. And when the bread-corn is beat out with the threshing instrument, (which was a kind of low cart, drawn by horses or oxen, with iron spikes at the bottom) he does not suffer it to be trampled on too much, or broken with the wheel on the floor, but carries it to the mill to be ground. So,

2. God would not always be warning, and making preparations for the execution of his judgments, but inflict them according to the several deserts of sinners. *Note; (1.) All wisdom cometh from above. If the husbandman be taught to plow and sow aright, he owes it to God wonderful in counsel. (2.) The heart of man is as the fallow-ground, obdurate and unfruitful, till God in his word breaks up the stubborn soil, and awakens the sinner's conscience. (3.) Christ is the living seed; the heart which receives him will yield fruit unto God. (4.) God knows the several dispositions of his believing people, and dispenses his word and providences in such a way towards them, as may most effectually answer the purposes of his grace. (5.) In proportion to their guilt and provocations will be the execution of the divine vengeance on the wicked. (6.) In all his ways and works God will manifest his own glory, and appear wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.*

of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust.

5 Moreover the multitude, of thy strangers shall be like small dust, and the multitude

### CHAP. XXIX.

THE second section of the discourse, contained in the present chapter, directed wholly to the Jews of Jerusalem, is nearly the same argument with that preceding. Herein the prophet denounces upon Jerusalem, and principally upon Sion, the more excellent part of the city, under the mystical name of *Ariel*, a grievous calamity which was to happen to it in process of time; the beginning whereof it should experience in the time of Sennacherib's expedition, shortly to take place, but with such ill success, that the enemies of the Jews, when they seemed almost, in their own imagination, to have attained their hope, should find themselves, by the divine judgment, utterly deluded and disappointed. In the mean time, the prophet convinces the Jews of their inattention and stupidity, their ignorance of the true doctrine of salvation, and of the divine revelation contained in it; and he denounces upon them the judgment of blindness and hardness of heart, giving the pious a lively hope, that the Gentiles should be called in their stead to the communion of the kingdom of God. This section may be divided into two parts; the *first* containing the denunciation of the *temporal judgment* to be inflicted on this people, ver. 1—8. The *second*, the *spiritual judgment*: in the *former part* we have, *first*, a preface which contains an address to the people of Jerusalem with a deploration of the calamity about to come upon them, for the punishment of their insolence and hypocrisy; ver. 1. *Secondly*, the declaration of that judgment whereby Jerusalem should be besieged by an incredible number of enemies, and should learn to *speake humbly*;—middle of ver. 1. to ver. 5. This declaration consists of various articles. *Thirdly*, the event of these hostile undertakings with respect to the enemies themselves, who, while they besieged Jerusalem, should either be destroyed with great slaughter, or at least experience that their joy on the expectation of taking the city and destroying the state was merely imaginary, ver. 6—8. The *latter part*, exhibiting the *spiritual judgment*, is two-fold; for, it either describes that judgment directly and clearly, in various articles, as well with respect to those who concealed their hypocrisy in the cause of religion with zeal for the traditions of their fathers, ver. 9—14. as to those who openly denied the hope of their fathers, and placed all their hope of safety in wealth, in craftiness, and their own self-approving wisdom, ver. 15, 16. Or, it declares that judgment indirectly and obliquely; namely, from the calling of the Gentiles to be substituted in the place of the disobedient Jews; ver. 17—24.

Ver. 1, 2. *Woe to Ariel, &c.*] It is evident from ver. 8, and all interpreters have agreed, that this prophecy is directed against Jerusalem; and it has been commonly thought that אֲרִיאֵל *Ariel*, which signifies *the lion of God*, and was the name of the altar of burnt-offerings, is here put for the city of Jerusalem, where this celebrated altar was erected;—which has appeared the more probable from the apparent allusion in the latter part of this verse to the rites performed at that altar. But Vitringa is of

opinion, that *Ariel*, or *the city of Ariel*, means the city of David, as the next clause explains it; for he thinks that *Ariel* was a mystical name for *David*, and one which was usual for the most celebrated warlike heroes among the Hebrews. Our prophet has used it in this sense in chap. xxxiii. 7. See also 2 Sam. xxiii. 20. And Bochart informs us, that even yet, among the Arabs and Persians, their most celebrated warriors are called, "The lions of God." There is great emphasis in the passage thus understood. The author of the *Observations*, however, cannot agree in this interpretation of Vitringa's; he asks, "How will this account for the altar's being called *Ariel*: Ezek. xliii. 15? Is it not proper rather to think of some circumstance which agreed with both, and might be the occasion of calling each of them *Ariel*?" Such, according to the eastern taste, was the consuming great quantities of provision, and especially of flesh. The modern Persians will have it, says D'Herbelot, in his account of *Schiraz*, a city of that country, that this name was given to it, because this city consumes and devours like a lion (which is called *Schir* in Persian) all that is brought to it; by which they express the multitude, and, it may be, the good appetite of its inhabitants. The prophet then denounces *Woe*; perhaps to Zion, as too ready to trust to the number of its inhabitants and sojourners, which may be insinuated by the same term, *Ariel*: and conformably to this interpretation, the threatening in the last clause of the second verse may be understood of Jerusalem consuming its inhabitants. We read of a land eating up its inhabitants. Numb. xiii. 32. So that Jerusalem, which had been called *Ariel* on account of the great quantities of *flesh* consumed there, above all the other cities of Judah, might be threatened by the prophet to be called *Ariel*, as consuming its inhabitants themselves: a very different sense from the preceding, and an extremely severe one. *Observations*, p. 114. Bishop Lowth renders the latter part of the first verse, *Add year to year; let the feasts go round in their course*. The general meaning of the whole passage is, that though the hypocritical inhabitants might think to please God by external worship, by their annual festivals and repeated sacrifices, yet these, without faith and right dispositions, would avail them nothing: God, notwithstanding them, would *distress*, or rather *inclose* and *besiege* them, (see Jer. xix. 9.) and reduce them to great sorrow and misery. The last clause, *And it shall be unto me as Ariel*, is differently understood. We have just seen one interpretation of it by the author of the *Observations*: Vitringa thinks that the sense of the prophet is, that God would make Jerusalem the *fiery centre* of his indignation; for Ariel is here taken, says he, in its true signification, not for the altar, but for the centre of the altar; and herein consists the force of the sentence. The centre of the altar sustained the symbol of the most holy and pure will of God, by which all the victims offered to God were to be approved, to which pertains the justice of God, burning like fire, and consuming the sinner, if no propitiation intervenes, but Jerusalem should become the theatre of the divine judgments;

of the terrible ones *shall be* as chaff that passeth away; yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly.

6 Thou shalt be visited of the LORD of Hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire.

7 And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision.

8 It shall even be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, *be*

*is* faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion.

9 ¶ Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink.

10 For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered.

11 And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it *is* sealed:

it should consume, like the fire upon the altar, as well the wicked and refractory sinners who should miserably perish in it, as the enemy who should besiege it: for a fire should burst forth from the face of the Lord, and consume the enemy, as it happened to the Assyrians. To shew the propriety of this interpretation, compare chap. xxxi. 8, 9, which refers to the present passage.

Ver. 3, 4. *And I will camp, &c.*] This second article explains the former. The prophet had said that Jerusalem should be straitened and distressed; which he here expresses plainly, ver. 3, declaring that the consequence of this siege should be, a reduction of the proud and self-confident inhabitants to that state of humility, that, like the Pythonesses, or those who had familiar spirits, they should, with a low and whispering voice, (a certain demonstration of the anxiety of their minds) mournfully express their sensations, or answer their enemies in supplication and humility. See ch. ii. 6. Though the prophet in this place may refer to different sieges of Jerusalem, yet it appears that the more immediate reference is to its last and terrible siege by the Romans; and by referring to Josephus's account of that siege, the reader will find a variety of particulars which will throw great light on this prophecy.

Ver. 5, 6. *Moreover, the multitude*] Vitringa is of opinion, that this passage sets forth the event of these hostile attempts against Jerusalem, particularly with respect to the Assyrians; in which view it is extremely clear: while others think that these words should be connected with those preceding, and that the prophet continues in them to describe the judgment to be inflicted on Jerusalem. In Vitringa's sense, which, says he, after long and diligent meditation, I prefer to any other, the words, *Thou shalt be visited*, should be read, and accordingly they are read by him, *They [the multitude] shall be visited*.

Ver. 7, 8. *And the multitude of all the nations*] These verses contain the event of the siege of Jerusalem, with respect to the Chaldees and Romans; and the meaning of the parable appears to be this, that the joy of the enemies, after the destruction of Jerusalem, shall not be of a long continuance, but imaginary; such as is the joy and

pleasure of dreamers; for, persuading themselves, after the great labour of taking and destroying Jerusalem, that they may give themselves up to rest, or sleep; that with the destruction of this state they had entirely cut off the religion of the true God, so that it could never more raise its head, and give trouble to the Roman empire and superstition; and on this account giving themselves awhile up to a dream of imaginary joy, they should at length be awakened from their sleep, and be experimentally convinced that they had fed themselves with false and delusive ideas; for, so far from hurting the true religion, these judgments of God should conduce to extend and amplify it, and to give it establishment over that idolatry which its enemies patronized. This was the case with many of the Chaldees, who became proselytes to the Jewish religion; and remarkably with the Romans; over whom that religion of Jesus Christ which came from the Jerusalem which they had destroyed, so remarkably triumphed: insomuch that Seneca, speaking of the Jews, says, that the conquered gave laws to the conquerors; *victi victoribus leges dederint*; and Rutilius, (who lived in the fifth century,) referring more immediately to the Christians, *victoresque suos natio victa premit*. See Vitringa.

Ver. 9, 10. *Stay yourselves, and wonder*] Or, *Stay, &c.* — *Make blind, and be ye blind; they are drunken, &c.* The prophet here proceeds to describe the spiritual judgment; the first gradation of which is contained in verses 9—12. The two former expressing this judgment both mystically and properly; the two latter the unhappy consequence of it. Upon the whole, this period describes the same judgment with that mentioned, chap. vi. 9, &c. viii. 14, 15. See also chap. xxviii. 7, 8. Vitringa supposes that the event which the people are called upon to stay and wonder at, is the manifestation of the kingdom of Christ; their rejection whereof should be attended with the spiritual blindness and hardness of heart here predicted, and which we learn sufficiently to have been the case from the Gospel. See Vitringa.

Ver. 11, 12. *And the vision, &c.*] These words set forth the consequence of the common blindness of the whole Jewish



12 And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned.

13 ¶ Wherefore the LORD said, Forasmuch as this people draw near *me* with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

14 Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, *even* a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise *men* shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent *men* shall be hid.

15 Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?

16 Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding.

17 ¶ *Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest?*

18 And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.

19 The meek also shall increase *their* joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

20 For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off:

Jewish nation, learned and unlearned, teacher and people; namely, their universal incapacity to interpret and to understand the word of God, especially the prophetic word; which incapacity Isaiah exposes in a parable no less plain than beautiful. How remarkably this prophecy has been and is fulfilled, we learn abundantly from those teachers of the Jews to whom the prophetic vision is to this day a *sealed book*, and of which the people, incapable of gaining instruction from their teachers, are equally ignorant, each being alike in gross and judicial darkness.

*Ver. 13, 14. Wherefore the Lord said]* This second article is so connected with that preceding as to explain it. It contains the fault, ver. 13. and the punishment, ver. 14. Our prophet every where excellently sets forth both in his usual manner; for no colours can more fully express the state of the Jewish nation, according to what we learn of it from the gospel-history, than these words. Our Lord himself has quoted and applied them to the Pharisees of his times, and their deluded followers. See Matt. xv. 8. Mark, vii. 6. Vitringa renders the last clause of the 13th verse, *And the reverence with which they honour me consists in precepts taught by men.* There needs no comment upon the 14th verse, more than what we have remarked in the former note. See St. Paul's application of it, 1 Cor. i. 19.

*Ver. 15, 16. Woe unto them, &c.] Woe unto them who with deep dissimulation seek to hide their counsel, &c. ver. 16. This perverseness of yours is as if the potter were reputed as clay; that the work should say of its maker, He made me not; or the thing framed, say of him that framed it, He hath no understanding.* Vitringa. The plain meaning of the prophet is, that their proceedings who attempted to hide their worldly counsels and subtle devices from Jehovah, were as absurd as if the clay should set itself against the potter. This reproof is levelled against the Sadducees, the Herodians, and those other sects among the Jews who, disclaiming dependence upon God, were for relying on the aid and protection of the Roman powers.

*Ver. 17. Is it not yet a very little while, &c.]* The prophet here proceeds to set forth this spiritual judgment upon the greater part of the Jewish nation obliquely, by foretelling the call of the Gentiles, who should be substituted in their place; an event, which he first proposes in general in this verse, and then he more particularly relates three consequences or effects of it; *First*, the spiritual blessings of *light* and *understanding* in divine things, and of joy and consolation to be diffused among the Gentiles, formerly *deaf* and *blind*: ver. 18, 19. *Secondly*, the subdual or destruction of the enemies who had opposed the truth of the Gospel, and its preachers: ver. 20, 21. *Thirdly*, a wonderful increase of the true seed of Abraham and Jacob, disseminated through the whole world, in whom those patriarchs, according to the promises given to them by God, might be able to recognize their true image, ver. 22—24. The proposition is metaphorically expressed; wherein the sudden and remarkable conversion of the Gentile world is spoken of as a thing no less extraordinary, than if *Lebanon*, a high and unfruitful hill, should be turned into a fruitful field; while the rejection of the Jews, on the other hand, should be as remarkable as the fruitful field becoming desolate, and being turned into a forest. This is a common image in our prophet; chap. xxxii. 15. xxxv. 1—6. xliii. 19, 20. See Rom. xi. 15. We have no need to speak of the completion of this prophecy, which we see daily fulfilled before our eyes.

*Ver. 18, 19. And in that day]* See Luke, ii. 32. Acts, xi. 18. Ephes. iv. 18. and other similar passages of the New Testament, for the best comment upon these words, *JESUS gave ears to the deaf, and sight to the blind*, as figurative of that spiritual deafness and blindness which he removes by his grace.

*Ver. 20, 21. For the terrible one, &c.]* The terrible and fierce were such as Herod Agrippa, who persecuted the apostles; the *scorners* and blasphemous, such as those who reproached the apostles when filled with the Spirit, as

21 That make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought.

22 Therefore thus saith the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale.

23 But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel.

24 They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.

being drunk with wine. The *watchers for iniquity*, or of *iniquity* were such as those priests and scribes, who consulted together to take Jesus by subtilty: they who *make a man an offender for a word*, such as those who condemned Stephen for certain words imputed to him: those who *lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate*, such as those who laid wait for Paul, after he had so fully reprovved and baffled them; and lastly, they who *overturn the just for a thing of nought*, for no cause, were such as they who put to death James the less, surnamed the Just, and others of the first Christians, against whom they could lay no just cause of offence. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 22—24. Therefore thus saith the Lord*] These verses contain the third consequence of turning Lebanon into a fruitful field;—the Gentiles being called to the privileges of the Christian dispensation. The prophet foretels that many spiritual children should be born to the church; in whom the true image of Abraham and Jacob should be seen, whom *the true sons of Jacob* (in whom Jacob yet lived) *should see without shame*, ver. 22. and with whom they should *sanctify and celebrate the name of the God of Jacob*; ver. 23. Which wonderful conversions should have such an effect, that those men who might be thought *erring in spirit*, wanting in understanding, and who had for a long time murmured against and reviled the doctrine of the Gospel, should at length themselves also receive it. The word *therefore*, in ver. 22. properly connects with the 17th verse. By the *murmurers*, &c. Vitringa understands the orators, sophists, philosophers, and others, who with their vain science first opposed the Gospel, but of whom many became afterwards converts to the Christian faith.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The subject of this prophecy is Jerusalem, the place where David *dwelt*, or *encamped*; it is called Ariel, *the lion of God*, some think in reference to the altar, which consumed the sacrifices as a lion his prey; or more probably as the metropolis of Judah, called the lion's whelp, Gen. xlix. 9. and whose standard was a lion.

1. The ruin of it is foretold, which all their sacrifices, because hypocritical, cannot prevent. Vain were the oblations from year to year, while their iniquities were unrepented of. God threatens to distress them, to fill every heart with heaviness and sorrow, and make the city like the altar of God, surrounded with the blood and carcases of the slain, and fire kindled in the midst of it. The besiegers, under a divine support, should surround it with mounts and forts without, beat down the walls, and reduce them to the most abject subjection; or bring them so low by famine, that their voices should, through weakness, scarcely be heard, like those who, pretending to familiar spirits,

whispered and muttered out of the dust. With marks of divine displeasure, God would assist their foes with thunder, earthquake, and tempest, and give them up at last into their hands, who should consume their city and temple with fire. *Note*; (1.) Formal services, while the heart continues unchanged and unhumiliated, are but an abomination in the sight of God. (2.) Woe unto those against whom God contends; against him there is no defence. (3.) The proudest sinner will sooner or later be laid in the dust, either in willing penitence, or terrible perdition.

2. God would disappoint their foes; they in their turn should suddenly be destroyed, their vain hopes of success be as a vision in the night, and their disappointment like the man who dreams of meat and drink, yet awakes hungry and thirsty; which may refer to the ruin of Sennacherib's army, though that will not agree with ver. 3. as they never raised any mount there; but more pointedly applies to the Roman army, whose sudden irruption, and numerous forces rushing to the siege, are pointed at ver. 5. and their disappointment, when the spoil they promised themselves would be so little answerable to their expectations, set forth in ver. 7, 8. The whole also may be applied to the Jews themselves, expressing the destruction of the success they expected, and the vanity of the hopes with which they flattered themselves, that their city would not be taken, till dreadful experience at last awaked them from their fatal reverie.

2dly, Whatever fulfilment the words of the prophecy beginning at the 9th verse had in the men of that generation, it is plain, from Rom. xi. 7, 8. that they refer to the times of Christ and the Gospel dispensation, and God's judgment of spiritual blindness inflicted on the obstinate Jews under that dispensation. But on this we shall enlarge, when we come to the passage in the New Testament.

1. The prophet calls aloud with the voice of warning: *Stay yourselves*, consider your ways, and run no more madly in the way of sin and ruin, *and wonder* at the long patience of God, *and cry ye out*, and cry at the impending judgments of God, if yet there may be hope.

2. The prophet describes their stupidity and judicial blindness. They were drunken; not merely with wine, but with corrupt principles, staggering, unsteady in their conduct, and ever turning aside from the right way. And to this God had in righteous judgment given them up, because they refused the knowledge of the truth; priests, prophets, and rulers, were all under this spirit of darkness and insatiation. The prophecies were as a sealed book, the wise no more understanding them than the ignorant. Which was eminently verified, when, in opposition to the brightest evidence, and fullest completion of the prophe-

CHAP. XXX.

*The prophet threateneth the people for their confidence in Egypt, and contempt of God's word. God's mercies toward his church. God's wrath and the people's joy in the destruction of Assyria.*

[Before Christ 713.]

**W**OE to the rebellious children, faith the LORD, that take counsel, but not

of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin:

2 That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt!

3 Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh

sies concerning the Messiah, the Jews obstinately rejected the Lord Jesus, and the rulers and priests were the chief in the transgression, blind leaders of the blind, hardened themselves, and hardening others against conviction. *Note;* (1.) They who will not take warning, will be given up to their own heart's lusts. (2.) It is a woeful case, when they who should teach others are blind and ignorant themselves. (3.) Multitudes, in the midst of the plainest light of Gospel truth, are still so overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, that their eyes are closed in darkness, and they are led captive by the devil at his will.

3. He charges them with vile hypocrisy. They draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, giving him the formal services of the lip and knee; but have removed their heart far from me; their affections being supremely placed on the world, and the things of it, and their souls utter strangers to any inward heart-approach to God; and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men; their religion was from education alone, not derived from God's word; and their worship destitute of spirituality, and suited to lull their souls asleep in stupid formality. Such was the case with the Jews, see Matt. xv. 3—9. and such is still the case with multitudes, who call themselves, and are counted by the world, good Christians, whose prayers are as regular as the hour returns, while their hearts are utter strangers to converting grace and communion with God. *Note;* That is no prayer which is not the soul's work.

4. God threatens them with condign punishment: a marvellous work he would work, at which they should be astonished.

[1.] The understanding of their wise men should perish. Though their schemes were laid so deep against the Lord, and against his Anointed, and so concealed, that they atheistically promised themselves that not even God could see or disappoint them—yet woe unto them! their politics were as absurd as wicked: their attempts to hide their counsel from him, and counteract his designs, were vain, since as easily as the potter moulds the clay, so could he mar their schemes, or fashion them after his own will; for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? as if self-created; or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding? which they in fact did by such conduct, though the folly of it was so evident. *Note;* (1.) They who set up for wise men and free-thinkers, and discard their Bibles, will prove at last the most egregious fools. (2.) A disbelief of God's all-seeing eye and universal agency is at the bottom of every work of darkness.

[2.] The Gentiles should shortly be called into the

church, and the Jews rejected. Though the one was now like a forest, it should, by the preaching of the Gospel, become as a fruitful field; and the other, though long favoured in a peculiar manner as God's heritage, should be utterly laid waste for their impenitence, and especially for their rejection of Christ and his Gospel: and this in the eyes of the Jews, and even of the apostles themselves, too partial at first to their own nation, appeared a marvellous work.

3dly, It having been foretold by the prophet, that the Gentiles should be called, and the Jews rejected, we have the blessings which the church should in that day of Gospel grace enjoy.

1. They who before were deaf to God's calls, and blind to any spiritual knowledge of the truth, should, by the preaching of the Gospel, in the demonstration of the Spirit and power, have the eyes of their mind enlightened, and be enabled to hear and receive the word of truth. *Note;* (1.) Every soul is by nature spiritually blind. (2.) The preaching of the Gospel is the grand means that God uses to bring the soul out of darkness into his marvellous light.

2. Joy and gladness shall revive the meek and poor in spirit. Such as are brought to a view of their own sinfulness, and humbly submissive to every dispensation of Providence, silent under provocation, and in their own eyes poor and perishing, these shall increase their joy in the Lord, under the experience of his love and care of them, and rejoice in the Holy One of Israel as their rich portion and exceeding great reward. *Note;* (1.) It is not external poverty, but internal lowliness of heart, to which the promise is made. (2.) Whatever injuries we receive, or wants we endure, if, in the midst of all, our hearts are quietly stayed upon God, we have cause of abundant joy.

3. The erroneous will be convinced, and they who murmured at God's word or commandments as hard sayings, be silenced, and humbly submit to his truth.

4. Their enemies and persecutors shall be destroyed. By the terrible one may be meant the rulers of the Jews, or the persecuting power of the pagan Roman emperors; or it may have respect to antichrist, whose kingdom shall be brought to nought, as the former enemies of Christ and his Gospel have been broken. The scerner signifies the philosophers of the Gentiles, or the Jews that scoffed at the doctrine of the cross, whose inveterate enmity against Christ and his apostles kept them always on the watch, and any word which could be misrepresented served for a ground of accusation: they laid snares for their faithful reprovers, that they might entangle them in their talk; and without proof or evidence condemned the just; and this was abundantly fulfilled in the conduct of the scries and

be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt *your* confusion.

4 For his princes were at Zoan, and his ambassadors came to Hanes.

5 They were all ashamed of a people *that* could not profit them, nor be an help nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach.

6 The burden of the beasts of the south: into the land of trouble and anguish, from

whence *come* the young and old lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent, they will carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the bunches of camels, to a people *that* shall not profit *them*.

7 For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength *is* to sit still.

and Pharisees, Matth. xxii. xxiii. but they received their just doom, and were cut off, according to the prophetic word, in their iniquities. *Note;* (1.) They who are Christ's servants, must expect the threatenings of the terrible, and the ridicule of the scorner. (2.) The enemies of religion are ever on the watch to catch at every slip or failing of the professors of it, as matter of railing accusation against them. Let it make us the more watchful to cut off occasion from those who desire occasion. (3.) We must not think it strange, to have a word dropped unadvisedly, construed into a heavy charge, or an innocent expression perverted to a most criminal meaning, when scoffers come to hear God's ministers, not for edification, but to lay snares for their reprovers; so persecuted they the prophets that were before us. (4.) If in the faithful discharge of our office we find a wicked world opposing, and with every base and malignant insinuation seeking to blacken us, it is a consolation that we are the more like our Lord. (5.) Whatever success at present may seem to attend those who oppose the cause of God and truth, they shall be cut off at the last.

5. The church should be gloriously enlarged, by the accession at last of the seed of Jacob. *Therefore thus saith the Lord, who redeemed Abraham* from Ur of the Chaldees, and out of all his troubles, *concerning the house of Jacob* his posterity, *Jacob shall not now be ashamed, and his face wax pale,* as when his degenerate seed rejected and crucified the Lord Jesus. *But when he seeth his children* recovered from their apostacy, *the work of mine hands,* by converting grace fashioned anew, *in the midst of him* assembled together, *they shall sanctify my name,* by believing in the Redeemer, and receiving his Gospel, *and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel,* returning to his worship and service. By Jacob here also the church of Christ may be meant, rejoicing in the conversion of all the true believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, in the latter day, who shall then together unite in the praises of their Lord.

#### CHAP. XXX.

THE third section of this discourse is contained in the four following chapters, and is of nearly the same argument with the preceding sections. The scene of it is to be placed at the time when Hosea, the last king of the Ephraimites, having shaken off the yoke of the king of Assyria, by a solemn message and presents implored the help of the Egyptians. See 2 Kings, xvii. 4, &c. The discourse in the present chapter is two-fold; the first part containing reproof, ver. 1—18.; the latter part consolation, ver. 19—33. The former part is again two-fold; its first

member respects the Ephraimites, ver. 1—7.; its *second*, both Ephraimites and Jews: in the first member, we have a reproof of the Ephraimites for seeking aid from Egypt, ver. 1, 2. and a prediction of the unhappy event of that purpose, which is proposed, ver. 3. and more largely declared, ver. 4—7. In the latter member, we have a sharp conviction of the incredulity and irreverence towards the prophetic declarations, in the people not only of Ephraim, but of Judah, as well those who at this time favoured the counsel of the Ephraimites, as those who should hereafter follow it; ver. 8—11. and a denunciation of the grievous judgment of God, which should bring destruction to both states, ver. 12—18. The consolatory part is also two-fold; the first member contains the benefits to be conferred upon the church after its deliverance, ver. 19—26.; the latter, the grievous judgment of God to be executed on the Assyrian: ver. 27—33. The benefits comprehended in the first member are, the restoration of the state, ver. 19.; abundant and pure instruction, ver. 20, 21.; sanctification, ver. 22.; pure and spiritual pasture joined with temporal blessings, ver. 23—25.; wonderful illumination of the fairs, and great glory to the church, ver. 26. The judgment of the Assyrian is comprised in *two* articles, each of which exhibits the judgment and its consequences; in the *former* article, the judgment, ver. 27, 28.; its consequences, ver. 29.: in the *latter*, the judgment, ver. 30, 31.; its consequences, ver. 32, 33.

*Ver. 1, 2. Woe to the rebellious children, &c.]* These two verses contain the proposition of the discourse, exhibiting the carnal counsel of the Ephraimites condemned by God, which makes the basis of this prophetic declamation. The Ephraimites are addressed as refractory children, more strongly to mark their impiety. See Deut. xxi. 18, &c. Hof. iv. 16. and Jer. ii. 18. *To cover with a covering, but not of God's Spirit,* is to seek help to themselves from the persuasion of false prophets, in opposition to the convictions and denunciations of true prophets, teaching them that their purposes are very displeasing to God.

*Ver. 3. Therefore, &c.]* The prophet here foretels the unfortunate event of their enterprize; namely, that their reliance on the strength of So, the Pharaoh or king of Egypt, should avail them nothing, but turn out to their confusion. See 2 Kings, xvii. 4. This is more fully set forth in the subsequent verses.

*Ver. 4—7. For his princes were at Zoan] When his princes—to Hanes,* ver. 5. *they were, &c.* ver. 6. *as to the burden of the beasts southward, unto a land—from whence come the lions and stout lion—*ver. 7. *Therefore have I called her, Rage to rest; or Pride [Rahab, a name of Egypt]*

8 ¶ Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever :

9 That this *is* a rebellious people, lying children, children *that* will not hear the law of the LORD :

10 Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits :

11 Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.

12 Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despised this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon :

13 Therefore this iniquity shall be to you

as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant.

14 And he shall break it as the breaking of the potter's vessel that is broken in pieces; he shall not spare: so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water *witbal* out of the pit.

15 For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not.

16 But ye said, No; for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and, We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift.

17 One thousand *shall flee* at the rebuke

*be still.* Vitringa. It is plain from these words of the prophet, that the ambassadors of the king Hosea, after they came into Egypt, should find every thing there unprepared, and averse to their wishes; and so, covered with shame, should soon understand from the state of things, that they could receive little or no benefit at all from this alliance, ver. 4, 5. In the next verses the prophet more fully explains this: for, seeing as it were immediately before his eyes the ambassadors of this people, otherwise sufficiently exhausted, bearing their splendid and sumptuous presents on camels and asses into Egypt, a country of invidious name, to the injury and contempt of the God of Israel, and perceiving that they would reap no advantage from this proud and sumptuous embassy; that the whole would be fruitless, or rather would raise the indignation of the Assyrians, and hasten the destruction of Samaria (as we learn from history was really the case); he cannot refrain, but exhibits to the life the whole scheme of this imprudence, folly, and incredulity, as it was immediately presented to his prophetic sight, with its shameful and sorrowful event; and teaches, in the end, that it should come to pass that Egypt, which is called רַבָּב *Rabab*—*fierceness, pride, rage*, should be entirely still, and so rest, as to be unable to help at all. This is the meaning of the passage, as it appears more plainly from the translation given by Vitringa. Egypt, at this time joined to Ethiopia, was of all countries most fertile of every fierce and wild creature which the nature of man abhors, both terrestrial and aquatic. See Boch. Hieroz. p. ii. lib. iii. c. 13. and Leo Africanus, Hist. Afr. c. ii. Vitringa observes, that there can be no doubt but the 6th verse has a higher and mystical reference, which may be collected from Nahum, ii. 12, 13.

Ver. 8—11. *Now go, write it before them, &c.*] See the analysis. The Spirit of God, about to convict the degenerate people of the foolishness of their counsels; pierces into the inmost source of their errors, namely, their irreverence and disregard of the true word of God, and

the faithful teachers of that word, and their contempt of the counsels suggested to them, in the name and by the authority of the Lord. He therefore places in the present period this most corrupt disposition of the people in full light, and paints it in strong colours, commanded by the Spirit of God to *write it in a book*, that it might be a monument to future ages, as well of the care and providence of God towards his people, as of their depraved disposition and foolish counsels, whereby they hastened their destruction. See Deut. xxxi. 19.

Ver. 12—14. *Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel*] The consequence of the fault is here exhibited by the prophet in two sentences; the former in these verses, the latter in verses 15—18. The prophet in this place declares, that their punishment shall be the entire destruction of their state, set forth under two chosen and apt figures; to which the prophet premises an introduction, thereby to conciliate authority to his words, in the name of that God whom the degenerate Israelites despised, and at the same time to set forth the principal crimes which had drawn down this punishment, ver. 12. The *first* metaphor (ver. 13.) is taken from a *breach* or a *bulging* in the lower part of a wall, which every moment threatens to burst forth, and consequently bring down the whole wall with it: the *second*, from the utter *breaking of a potter's vessel*: and the meaning of each figure is, that the state of both nations, Ephraimites and Jews, should be totally and entirely dissolved. The event fully proves the truth of the prediction. See ch. iii. iv. ix. &c. Ezek. v. and Jer. xlv. 11, 12. Perhaps the 13th and 14th verses might be rendered better thus, *Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a falling breach, a bulging in a high wall, whose breaking down cometh suddenly, in an instant: Ver. 14. and its breaking down shall be as the breaking of a potter's vessel, which is so broken that nothing is spared; that in its breaking there is not found a sherd.* See Vitringa.

Ver. 15—18. *For thus saith the Lord*] The second sentence

of one; at the rebuke of five shall ye flee: till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on an hill.

18 ¶ And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him.

19 For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of

thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee.

20 And though the LORD give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers:

21 And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.

22 Ye shall defile also the covering of thy

sentence contains a judicial reproof and denunciation, wherein the punishment to be inflicted upon the disobedient and badly advised, is distinctly compared with the crime; for the Almighty, wonderful in all his ways, generally puts carnal men to shame by those very things wherein they place their confidence. Their crime here again is twice proposed; namely, their pertinacious struggle against the counsel suggested to them by the prophets of God, and their contempt of that counsel, ver. 15, 16. Its consequence; first, the disappointment of their hope, and the destruction of their evil consultations, ver. 17. And then the slowness of God, and his desire to be gracious before he exerts his judgments, ver. 18. The meaning of the whole period is this, that if the Ephraimites and Jews, in the uncertain state of their affairs, would abstain from all care and endeavours to defend themselves by foreign aid, and would commit themselves to the care and providence of God with a settled mind, in faith and hope, they should then be safe, and avoid the calamities which threatened them: which salutary counsel the prophet shews that they obstinately despised, and would despise; that, on the contrary, they were determined to seek for deliverance from the yoke of the Assyrians or Chaldees in the help of the Egyptians, who were remarkable for their swift and fine horses, ver. 16. on which account they should meet with the calamities decreed for them; so that, seized with panic fear, when they came to the point, they should turn their backs upon their enemies, and fly with that swiftness with which they had thought to make their enemies fly; inasmuch, that very few of them should escape the common destruction:—middle of ver. 16, 17. And although God had determined not to deny his grace and help to them in affliction, when reduced to the last extremity, and after they had experienced the vanity of their own counsels, yet would he bestow that mercy slowly, with delay; because the enormity of their offence required a severity of punishment agreeable to the laws of justice. However, he would not fail the hope of those who believed on him; on the contrary, all they that should wait for him should be blessed. The word שׁוּבָה *shubab*, rendered returning, in the 15th verse, is rendered, and, as it seems, very properly, by Vitringa, conversion, or change of council. Instead of your strength, he reads, your victory; and in the 18th verse he reads the first clause, And therefore the Lord will delay to be gracious, &c. See the first verse of the next chapter.

Ver. 19. For the people shall dwell] The consolatory part of this discourse begins here, which is connected with the preceding part by the last clause of the former verse, Blessed are all they that wait for him: here follows, therefore, a series of excellent blessings, to be conferred by God upon his church, after these judgments. The prophet has so ordered his style in setting forth these benefits, that when he seems to promise only temporal blessings to the church, he would be understood mystically under these figurative emblems. The first of these is the restoration of the state, upon the repentance and earnest prayers of the people, who are promised that they shall dwell again at Jerusalem, the seat of their religion, and the metropolis of the people of God. This prophecy refers to the restoration of the people from Babylon, when the tears which they had shed in banishment were wiped away, and God heard the prayers and vows of his people after the time of his indignation was expired. See Ps. cxxxvii. 1, &c. Dan. ix. 20, 21, &c. and Vitringa.

Ver. 20, 21. And though the Lord give you, &c.] The prophet here, setting forth the second benefit, tells them, that though at the time of the restoration of their state they should by no means be free from various afflictions, (as Daniel also foretels, ix. 25.) yet these temporal afflictions should be compensated and exceeded by the spiritual blessing by which God would then bless his church: which should be an abundance of instruction from their true teachers, for that is the meaning of the original word מוֹרִים *morim*. The metaphor in the 21st verse is taken from a father or instructor, who follows carefully the children going before him, committed to his care; and when he perceives them turning from the way wherein they should go, teaches and instructs them. The same metaphor is used Ps. xxv. 4, 5, 8. It is very certain, from the history of that period, that the Jews, after their restoration from Babylon, were a long time in great straits, though they were blessed with many remarkable and excellent instructors, at the head of whom we may conceive Ezra, like a father of a family leading and instructing his people. See Neh. viii. 2, &c. And herein the church had a prelude of that more copious and spiritual instruction, to be diffused by the ministers of the Gospel, under the œconomy of Jesus Christ.

Ver. 22. Ye shall defile also the covering, &c.] The meaning of these words is, that the people, at the period of time

graven images of silver, and the ornament of thy molten images of gold: thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence.

23 Then shall he give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the ground withal; and bread of the increase of the earth, and it shall be fat and plenteous: in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures.

24 The oxen likewise and the young asses

that ear the ground shall eat clean provender which hath been winnowed with the shovel and with the fan.

25 And there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill, rivers and streams of waters in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall.

26 Moreover, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven

time here marked out, should refrain from idolatry; not public only, but private and domestic also, which seems here particularly to be described; for the Jews, prone to idolatry even when it was publicly prohibited, did not fail to retain in their houses those little images of divination, which the Latins called *Penates*, and the Hebrews anciently *תרפים Teraphim*. It is remarkable, as we have before observed, that after their return from Babylon they never relapsed into idolatry. The beginning of this verse might be rendered, *And you shall deem unclean, every one of you, the covering of his graven images, &c.*

*Ver. 23—25. Then shall he give the rain of thy seed] And he shall give rain for thy seed.* Lowth. It appears very plainly from the latter end of the 25th verse, and from the 26th, that the prophet here is not to be understood literally, but figuratively, and that the words contain a splendid promise of pure and abundant spiritual pasture; which is exhibited in four articles, and closed with a sign of the time when this benefit should be conferred upon the church. The *first* article is, that the Lord would give rain for the seed sown, and a great increase of bread; where, though the literal sense may not be excluded, yet the figurative meaning is, that God would supply the spiritual sowing, (that is to say, pure and sound instruction in the word of righteousness, to be made by spiritual sowers, teachers properly furnished from the word of truth) with a copious blessing, and the heavenly grace of his Holy Spirit, so that a great produce of all spiritual graces should follow from it. See ch. xxxii. 15. and Zech. x. 1. xiv. 17. The next article is, that the cattle in those times should feed in large pastures. The literal meaning is plain: the mystical is, that *the flock of the Lord* should find an abundance to exercise themselves in the undertaking and search after spiritual things; not only for the necessities of their spiritual life, but for their delight and satisfaction in that word of God especially, where there is sufficient for the spiritual repast of every true believer. The *third* article still runs in the same metaphor; *the oxen likewise, &c.* See ch. xxxii. 20. The word עֲבָדֵי *obedi*, rendered *ear* in this verse signifies to *plough* or *till*, which was done in those countries by oxen or asses. See Boch. Hieroz. pars i. lib. ii. c. 3. Instead of *clean*, Vitringa prefers *savoury provender*; such as was of a choicer kind, and either mixed with salt, or some kind of herbs, which rendered it more palatable to the animals. The mystical signification is, that the ministers labouring in the word and doctrine, both of superior and inferior order, should be honestly supported,

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and themselves find abundant supply of sound and wholesome words for the work of the ministry. See 1 Cor. ix. 9, &c. 1 Tim. v. 17, 18. The *fourth* article is, ver. 25. that *there should be upon every high mountain, &c. rivers and streams of water*; which cannot be understood literally: the mystical meaning is, that in all the more celebrated places, whether of kingdoms or cities, there should be synagogues, public schools, or oratories, in which the word of God, and the doctrine of pure religion, should be copiously taught; so that the lovers of true wisdom might there quench their thirst, and apply the waters of sound instruction to their use. So the metaphor is used, ch. xxxv. 6. xli. 18. The time in which these benefits should be conferred upon the church is denoted by this character, ver. 25. *In the day of the great slaughter, when the towers shall fall*; whereby a certain remarkable period is denoted, in which God would take severe vengeance upon the enemies of his church, with the destruction of many, and those the *chief* and *greatest* personages; for all interpreters are agreed, that these are metaphorically understood by *towers*. See ch. ii. 15. The period, in its first and literal sense, is to be applied to the times of the Maccabees; but, in its secondary and full sense, to the kingdom of Jesus Christ. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 26. Moreover, the light of the moon, &c.]* The images of light and darkness are made use of in almost all languages, to represent prosperity and adversity; but the Hebrews make use of them more frequently than any other nation, insomuch that they scarce ever omit them when the subject will bear them. They may thereby be referred to the parabolic style, wherein they are used with greater boldness and luxuriance than in any other: for the Hebrews do not confine themselves to the images of the spring, of the day-break, or of a cloudy night; but describe the sun and stars, rising as it were out of a new creation, with redoubled splendor, or immersed a second time into chaos and primeval darkness. Does the prophet promise a renewal of the divine favours, and a revival of every kind of felicity to his people? With what dazzling colours does he paint the event, which no version can convey, nor indeed any totally obscure! *The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, &c.* There is nothing difficult in the literal meaning of these words, which informs us of the fifth illustrious benefit to be conferred upon the church, together with the sign of the time in which it should be conferred. The emblem made use of by the prophet is singly designed to express the great and exuberant plenty

4 I

of

days, in the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.

27 ¶ Behold, the name of the LORD cometh from far, burning *with* his anger, and the burden *thereof* is heavy: his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire:

28 And his breath, as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity: and *there shall be* a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing *them* to err.

29 Ye shall have a song, as in the night *when* a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the LORD, to the mighty One of Israel.

30 And the LORD shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall shew the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of *his* anger, and *with* the flame of a devouring fire, *with* scattering, and tempest, and hail-stones.

31 For through the voice of the LORD shall the Assyrian be beaten down, *which* smote with a rod.

of light with which the people of God should be blessed at that time; and the sum of what he says is, that God would copiously and gloriously illuminate his church by his Spirit, and that the church should *be sanctified and rejoiced by his glory*, Exod. xxix. 43. inasmuch that if the former times were compared, its measure and abundance should be as much more as seven exceeds one, or as the collected light of seven days exceeds the light of one day, or as the light of the sun exceeds that of the moon. See Zech. xii. 8. The sign of the time in which this event should happen, is said to be *in the day when the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, &c.* that is to say, when he restores the Jews, utterly ruined and overthrown, and with them the church, miserably afflicted and fallen by its idolatry, vices, and hypocrisy, and gives again to religion its honour and beauty. Compare ver. 13, 14. and ch. i. 5, 6. The time here pointed out must necessarily be the same with that mentioned in the preceding note, for the subject is the same. See 1 Mac. xiii. 41. xiv. and 1 Peter, i. 8. 2 Cor. iv. 6. Vitringa, and Bishop Lowth's 4th Prelection.

Ver. 27, 28. Behold, the name of the Lord cometh] *Lo! the name of JEHOVAH cometh from afar; his wrath burneth, and the flame rageth violently: his lips are filled with indignation; and his tongue is as a consuming fire. His spirit is like a torrent overflowing; it shall reach to the middle of the neck: he cometh to toss the nations with the van of perdition, &c.* Bishop Lowth. This exquisitely fine and most sublime passage refers, according to Vitringa, to the formidable judgment of God upon the Assyrian, as a type of other powerful enemies, who in the various ages of the church should arise up against it. It is thus connected with the argument and scope of the whole discourse, wherein the prophet convinces the Ephraimites of the folly and vanity of their counsels, in imploring the aid of the Egyptians against the Assyrians, to the utter neglect of their duty towards God; and foretels that the event of this counsel would be the entire subversion of their state, as we have seen, ver. 3. and 13, 14. This period concerning the judgment of the Assyrian, is connected with and answers to each part of this argument: for it teaches that they had no need to fly to Egypt in a doubtful case, since God was sufficient to defend them, and had determined the destruction of the Assyrian. For a similar connection, see chap. xxxi. 3, 4. Besides, the prophet, having foretold the

subversion of the Ephraimites by the Assyrians, subjoins the judgment upon the Assyrian, to inform true believers that nothing of this happened without the will of God; so we find, in chap. ix. and x. after the subversion of Ephraim had been foretold, the destruction of the Assyrian is immediately subjoined, ver. 5, &c. More immediately this passage connects with the latter part of the 25th verse, where having mentioned the fall of the *towers*, or of the powerful enemies of the church, a remarkable example thereof in the Assyrian is given in these verses, wherein the prophet, speaking *humano more*, (after the manner of men) introduces God as an enraged prince, prepared to take vengeance on his enemies, and to pour upon them the severity of his indignation. The reader, by referring to the destruction of Sennacherib, and the character of that proud and insolent prince, will see still more beauty and emphasis in this passage. The meaning of the last phrase in the 28th verse is, that God, according to the secret ways of his wonderful providence, would lead the Assyrian with his great army, as it were with a *bridle*, to his utter destruction, while he was vainly proposing to himself the most ample success. See the passage remarkably explained, ch. xxxvii. 29.

Ver. 29. Ye shall have a song, &c.] The consequence of God's judgment upon the Assyrian, the prophet here declares, should be great rejoicing in the Jewish church, celebrated with hymns and songs on that night in which their haughty enemy should be destroyed: such songs as the Israelites used when delivered from Egypt, and on other occasions. See Exod. xv. 1, &c. Judg. v. 1, &c. The *holy solemnity* seems to mean the passover, when the great *הלל* *hallel* was sung. The other figure is taken from the custom of bringing the first-fruits with the sound of the pipe to the temple. See Deut. xxvi. 1, 2, &c. and Lightfoot on the Ministry of the Temple, ch. xvi. sect. 5. This verse might be better rendered, *Ye shall have a song [in that night] as in the night when the festival is sanctified, and joy of heart like his who moveth to the sound of the pipe, when going to the mountain of the Lord, to the Rock of Israel.* See Vitringa.

Ver. 30, 31. And the Lord shall cause, &c.] The prophet resumes the thread of his narration from ver. 28. and having hinted, not obscurely, in the preceding verse, the time of the execution of the judgment, he describes in



32 And in every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which the LORD shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps :

and in battles of shaking will he fight with it.

33 For Tophet is ordained of old ; yea, for the king it is prepared ; he hath made it deep

the present verse the manner of it ; which, from this and the parallel passage, ch. xxix. 6. we conceive to be thus ; that it should come to pass, that a mighty and terrible tempest should be raised up by God, in which thunders, lightnings, showers, hail, and scattering winds, should be so mixed, that all mortals should understand the just God was descending in clouds to punish his enemies and avenge his glory ; which tempest raging, the angel of the Lord, either by lightnings and hail-stones, as may seem probable, or by some other method, should beat down the best and most flourishing part of the Assyrian army, whose rod or staff had for a long time been grievous to the people of God. See chap. xxvii. 36. and Psal. xviii. 12—14.

Ver. 32, 33. *And in every place*] The prophet here again, as in the 29th verse, subjoins the consequence of the fall of the Assyrian. The sum of the passage is, that in every place which the Assyrian, passing with his formidable army, had left desolate, or where he had rested with his army, his overthrow should be celebrated with the sound of tabrets and harps ; since God himself, going forth against the Assyrians, should in such a manner shake and disperse them, that they should utterly disappear ; for that this terrible punishment had been for a long time destined by God for this enemy in the land of Canaan : that *pile*, to be kindled by the anger of God, had been of old prepared for him, into which he was to be cast, as into a terrestrial Gehenna, and there to be utterly consumed. The 32d verse should be rendered, *And every place, where that grounded staff shall have passed, and upon which the Lord shall have laid it, [or caused it to rest] shall be [passed] with tabrets and harps : for in tremendous battles will he fight against them.* The Assyrian is here called מוֹסֵד מַטֵּה *matteh musadab*, a grounded staff, *baculus fundatus*, because the Assyrian empire had, by the permission of the Divine Providence, arrived at that *strength and stability*, as to be able to execute the divine judgments, as well upon other nations as upon his own people. See chap. xiv. 5. and Hab. i. 12. and concerning *Tophet*, or *the valley of Hinnom*, Josh. xv. 8. and Jer. xix. 6. Vitringa observes, that *Tophet* must here be understood not in a literal but in a figurative sense, for the *place of punishment* to be inflicted upon the Assyrians by the burning indignation of God ; in the same manner as *Gehenna* denotes the place of punishment of the impenitent : and that the *fire and much wood* denote the *matter of the punishment* destined for the king of Assyria and his army, as well with respect to its nature and effect, as its cause. The *making the valley deep and large*, signifies the same as the *pile* constructed of *much wood* ; namely, the greatness of the destruction to be spread through the extensive army of the Assyrian ; and indeed it was necessary that this *valley* and this *pile* should be large, to contain 185,000 men. The meaning of the phrase *ordained of old* is, that God had absolutely fixed and determined this event. It was *prepared for the king* ; whereby the prophet shews, that his army first, and Sennacherib himself afterwards, should become obnoxious to the divine judgment. And the last phrase, *the breath*

of the Lord, &c. alludes to the destroying angel, the executor of his judgment. See ch. x. 17. This is the literal interpretation of the words, wherein the prophet represents the Assyrian destruction as the type of that of all the enemies and persecutors of the church ; and further, these destructions as a figure of the infernal fire, wherein the unbelieving and cruel persecutors of the church shall be tormented for ever, and which is said to be *prepared for the devil and his angels*, Matt. xxv. 41.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, It was the sin and folly of the Jews to leave the rock of ages, to trust on the broken reed of human supports ; and they severely smarted for it.

1. A woe is pronounced on the rebellious children of Judah, and the cause of it declared. In the day of danger, instead of applying to God, and seeking his guidance and protection, they placed their confidence in the wisdom of their own measures, and the alliance they sought with Egypt, expecting from them a shelter against the impending storm of the Assyrians : and thus by sin not only provoked God to chastise them, but also, by their disregard of him under their corrections, filled up the measure of their iniquities ; his children in profession, but rebels in their practice. *Note* ; (1.) Distrust of God's providence is virtually to deny his government of the world, and to turn rebels ; nay, atheists. (2.) If afflictions bring us not nearer to God, they will exceedingly harden, and drive us farther from him.

2. Their confidence would fail them, whatever cost they were at, whatever difficulties they were put to, in order to obtain the alliance of Egypt, or however fair the promises of Pharaoh to support them. God was near to be consulted and to help them, and required nothing from them but an humble and sincere application ; yet they rather chose to encounter the dangers of the road which led to Egypt, through deserts abounding with lions and serpents ; to burden the weary beasts with their choicest riches, as presents to purchase Pharaoh's aid ; to go so far as Hanes and Zoan for help, and, though so long and cruelly their house of bondage, thence to seek relief : justly, therefore, doth God warn them, *The strength of Pharaoh shall be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion*, failing and deceiving them, and making them vexed at their own folly, so dearly to purchase an ally, who, instead of help or profit, should be their reproach, chap. xxxvi. 6. *Note* ; (1.) The self-righteous, like these Jews, grudge no expence, or trouble in labouring to establish their own righteousness, which must prove their ruin, instead of accepting of Christ, his merit, intercession, and Holy Spirit, freely offered, and which would never fail them. (2.) When we leave God in our trials to trust on men, we deserve well to rue our folly and sin in shame and disappointment.

3. The prophet warns them of their only method of safety. *Their strength is to sit still* ; instead of sending their ambassadors, or seeking foreign assistance, to keep at home, and patiently expect the salvation of God. *Note* ; If we desire

and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.

desire to extricate ourselves from distress, it must not be by the use of undue means, or impatient struggles, but by patient dependance and waiting upon God.

2dly, For a testimony against them, for a warning to others, and to vindicate God's justice in their punishment, the prophet is commanded to write their sins, and threatened destruction, on a table, that it might be hung up in some conspicuous place; and to note it in a book for future times, *that this is, or because this is a rebellious people*: this was either the substance of the writing, or the cause why God would have it recorded; they were rebels against God, *lying children*; who bore a relation to God in profession, but in practice they denied him; *children that will not bear the law of the Lord*, pay no regard to it, but cast the word behind their back. Two heavy charges are particularly laid against them, and each has a terrible threatening annexed thereto.

1. They said *to the seers*, See not, as if they wanted them to connive at their sins, endeavouring to discountenance the freedom of their reproofs, or to silence them utterly; *and to the prophets*, Prophecy not unto us right things, the truths of God's word, the evil and guilt of their conduct, and the threatened judgments; *Speak unto us smooth things*, prophecy deceits, not the harsh words of wrath and damnation, but visions of peace and prosperity: *get ye out of the way, turn aside out of the path*, so as not to obstruct them in their sinful courses by remonstrating against their iniquities; *cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us*, by no more urging their awful mission from him, or prefacing their threatenings with the view of the character of God, as the jealous and sin-avenging Jehovah. Note; (1.) They are in a dangerous way, who are disgusted at the fidelity, plainness, and seriousness with which God's ministers reprove their sins. (2.) Though men's ears are offended at the harsh terms, damnation, hell, eternity of torments, and unquenchable fire, the faithful preacher may not please them by softening those terrors, with which he is commanded to persuade men. (3.) A zealous minister is a burdensome stone in the sinner's way, and robs him of the peace that he seeks in his delusions. (4.) They who prophecy smooth things to lull the sinner asleep, and flatter the confidence of the formal, will be indeed highly acceptable to the world, but must expect from God the doom of perfidy and falsehood. (5.) If a prophet can be seduced to turn aside, sinners then securely transgress, countenanced by such an example.

God denounces their doom; that *Holy One of Israel*, whose name was burdensome to them, will execute it, and that word which they have despised shall rise in judgment against them; because they rejected his warnings, and trusted in *oppression and perverseness*, in their wealth got by such wicked methods, or their allies purchased thereby. Their destruction should come sudden and terrible, as *a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall*, which rushes suddenly down before the storm, and crushes under its ruins those who fled thither for shelter; and should be as irreparable as the potter's vessel, dashed in pieces by an iron rod, that never can be reunited. Note, (1.) Whe-

ther men will hear or whether they forbear, we must not cease to warn them solemnly from God. (2.) The confidence of the sinner, and the self-righteous, is like the tottering wall: in the day of wrath it will overwhelm them, and their damnation be not only unexpected and terrible, but irrecoverable and eternal.

2. They opposed the plainest and most salutary advice. *For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel*, whose burdensome name they could not bear, though his holiness was the great security of his promises, *In returning and rest shall ye be saved*: this is the path of safety, to return from their evil ways; and instead of trusting on Egypt, to wait patiently on God; *in quietness*, expecting help from above: *and in confidence in the salvation of God shall be your strength*; for thus no enemy could prevail against them; *and ye would not*: they obstinately refused to leave the matter in God's hand. *But ye said, No*; bent on their own devices; *for we will flee upon horses*, to secure their persons or treasures, or to seek foreign assistance; *therefore shall ye flee*, be left to their own folly, and be chased by their foes: *and we will ride upon the swift*, in hopes to escape, but in vain; *therefore shall they that pursue you be swift*, and arrest you in your flight. Utterly dispirited, *one thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one*. See Lev. xxvi. 7, 8. *at the rebuke of five*; before the most inconsiderable number of enemies shall ye flee, till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on an hill; scattered and solitary, and almost utterly consumed. Note; (1.) When we truly return to God, we may assuredly expect his salvation. (2.) In every trial it should be much more our concern to have our heart brought to quietness and rest in God, than to be anxious about the means of our deliverance. (3.) They who are enabled wholly to place their confidence in Christ can then do all things, he strengthening them. (4.) They who will not make use of the medicine which never fails to cure, deserve to die of their disease. (5.) When the sinner seeks to fly from God's vengeance, he will quickly feel how vain is the attempt.

3dly, After the former threatenings, consolation is promised to the faithful, though he may a little delay.

1. In the midst of judgment God would remember mercy: *and therefore will the Lord wait that he may be gracious unto you\** his faithful people, whom, as the word may signify, he pants to deliver out of their troubles; *and therefore will ye be exalted, or will exalt his Son* as a prince and Saviour in the midst of them, *that he may have mercy upon you*: for the Lord is a God of judgment, as faithful to his promises as he is just in his corrections; and therefore *blest are all they that wait for him*; they will in the issue be made happy in his salvation, and their patient hope be crowned with deliverance. *For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem*, safe amidst all the threatenings of Sennacherib: *thou shalt weep no more*, as they did in the day

\* In general, as I have once before observed, I make it a rule, in my Reflections, to consider the Text according to our common English Translation.

## C H A P. XXXI.

*The prophet sheweth the extreme folly of trusting to Egypt, and forsaking God: he exhorteth to conversion: he sheweth the fall of Assyria.*

[Before Christ 713.]

**W**OE to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and

trust in chariots, because *they are many*; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!

2 Yet he also *is* wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words: but will arise against the house of the evil-doers, and against the help of them that work iniquity.

of their distress: *he will be very gracious unto thee, exceeding thy most sanguine hopes, at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee, as he did Hezekiah's prayer, when he spread their afflicted case before the Lord.* *Note;* (1.) God waits to be gracious: no sooner does the sinner return, than he is ready to receive him. (2.) Persevering prayer ever brings an answer of peace. (3.) We shall find every trial which has exercised our faith, and quickened our application to God, a rich blessing to us in the issue.

2. The Lord will provide them with the rich means of grace, to preserve them in the path of duty. In the times of persecution, probably under Ahaz, their faithful teachers were driven into obscurity; but God promises now to restore them, that they might publicly and quietly enjoy the benefit of their ministrations. And they should hear a voice behind them, the Spirit of truth, who should be sent to guide them into all truth, *saying, This is the way, walk ye in it;* directing them to the written word as their rule, enlightening their minds to see it, and inviting them to follow it, when they turned *to the right hand, or the left* from the strait way of God's commandments. And this is particularly applicable to the times of Christ, when he raised up his zealous servants, and sent his Spirit to direct his faithful people in the way of life and glory, and to bring them to himself, who is the way, the truth, and the life. *Note;* (1.) Among the greatest afflictions that God's people lament, and which is worse than a famine of bread and water, is the famine of the word. (2.) Though the church may be under persecution, and faithful ministers especially driven into a corner, yet God will rebuke the storm, and bring them from their concealment again, to the joy of his people. (3.) It becomes us to be attentive to the voice of conscience, and the secret warnings of God, when tempted and in doubt how to act.

3. They should then renounce their idolatry, their besetting and most provoking sin. Their idols now, though made of richest metal, nicely engraved, and curiously adorned, with abhorrence should be cast away, as polluted and nauseous. And this was fulfilled on their deliverance from Sennacherib, see 2 Kings, xviii. 4. 2 Chron. xxix. 16. and after the Babylonish captivity this evil was radically cured. *Note;* (1.) Nothing engages the heart so much to God as a sense of his goodness. (2.) True penitents abhor their sins, and put from them as far as possible whatever they have found a means of temptation to them in the time past.

4. Plenty shall be restored to them. Their ground, watered with the dew of heaven, should yield abundant increase, see chap. xxxvii. 30. Their cattle should fatten

in rich pastures, and eat provender winnowed, such plenty being in the land. The rain descending as rivers from the hills, should make their valleys fruitful, that they might stand thick with corn, and add to the joy of their deliverance from the Assyrian army slaughtered by the sword of the destroying angel. And this may well be applied to the abundance of Gospel grace, which will be dispensed in the latter day, when the high towers of Babylon mystical shall fall, and the earth be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. *Note;* The minister, like the husbandman, may sow the seed, but it is God alone who giveth the increase; yet this must not supersede, but quicken our labours.

5. Uncommon light and joy would then be diffused. *The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days;* expressive of their exultation on the destruction of the Assyrians, when their breaches made by that army should be repaired, and the wounds of their state healed: and may be referred to the day of Christ at present, when every awakened sinner, brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light, rejoices with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, at seeing the breach which sin had made bound up by the sacrifice of a Redeemer, and experiences the healing of this blessed Saviour's grace in his soul: and perhaps it looks forward to the expected glorious spread of the Gospel, when all afflictions of God's people will be at an end, and the nations of the faithful shall walk in the light of the Lord.

4thly, The happiness of God's people being intimately connected with the destruction of their foes, the prophet foretels the utter ruin of the latter.

The great agent in this, is God himself, from heaven sending forth his terrible wrath against the army of Sennacherib, swallowing up the hosts of Assyria as a deluge, and sifting them in the sieve of vanity; the whole being chaff, dispersed with the breath of his displeasure: his bridle in their jaws should cause them to err, turned backwards from their designs of destroying Jerusalem, as a horse is governed by its rider. At his voice his minister of flame shall go forth armed with lightning, tempest, and hail-stones; and stretching forth his more than mortal arm, spread universal destruction around. The rod which smote God's people, shall now be broken, before the *grounded staff;* the judgment of God lying so heavy on the Assyrians, that none should be able to withstand it in that night of terror. Tophet, in the valley of the son of Hinnom, where they encamped, is ordained for their slaughter-house, deep and large; so often defiled with the abominable idolatries of those who passed their children through the fire

3 Now the Egyptians *are* men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fail together.

4 For thus hath the LORD spoken unto me, Like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shep-

herds is called forth against him, *he* will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them: so shall the LORD of Hosts come down to fight for mount Zion, and for the hill thereof.

5 As birds flying, so will the LORD of Hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver *it*, and passing over he will preserve *it*.

fire to Moloch; rendered abominable, as covered with the blood of the corpses of the slain, which the lightning of God scorched; or where the Jews burnt the bodies which they found dead in the morning. *Note;* (1.) It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (2.) The burnings of Tophet represent the eternal punishment of impenitent sinners. Our Saviour calls the place of the damned, Gehenna, in allusion to this valley of Hinnom; there the greatest kings, as well as the meanest slaves, whose guilt provokes the wrath of God, lie down in flames which never can be quenched; and there the multitude of sinners, with the devil and his angels, are tormented day and night in those everlasting burnings, which *the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle.* *Note;* However now the wicked triumph, the time is short, and their ruin terrible.

#### CHAP. XXXI.

THIS and the following chapter, which are very improperly divided in our English Bible, contain the second part of the third section of this discourse, and are nearly of the same argument with that preceding. They may be properly divided into two reproofs, to which are added consolatory promises. The *first* reproof respects the Ephraimites, and contains a minatory proposition concerning the folly of seeking aid from Egypt; ver. 1. and the reasons of that proposition: first, from the comparison of the divine perfection, power, wisdom, with the similar attributes of the Egyptians: ver. 2, 3. Secondly, by opposition, that is, from the effect of placing confidence in God, a remarkable example whereof should be given in the singular defence and protection which God would procure for the Jews, reduced by the Assyrians to great straits; which benefit is described, ver. 4, 5. with its adjuncts, particularly repentance, ver. 6, 7. the fall of the Assyrian, ver. 8, 9. and its consequence,—the just and glorious reign of a pious king, chap. xxxii. 1, 2. and the conversion of many from inconsideration and wickedness to a serious regard for the ways and works of God: ver. 3—8. The *second* reproof, with the consolation, is also two-fold. The reproof consists of two articles, prophetically denouncing a double calamity: the *first*, that Assyrian calamity, ver. 9, 10. the second the Babylonish, ver. 11—14. The consolatory part exhibits various blessings to be conferred upon the church after the affliction of those times; among which the radical and causal one is the effusion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, ver. 15. Its consequences, the conversion of the Gentiles:—middle of ver. 15, 16. Spiritual righte-

ousness and peace: ver. 17. The security of the church under the divine protection:—middle of 17, 18. The judgments of God upon the enemies of the church: ver. 19. and the care of the rulers and teachers of the people of God, in diligently promoting the work of grace: ver. 20.

*Ver. 2. Yet he also is wise]* There are two things which those who placed their confidence in Egypt peculiarly extolled in the Egyptians; namely, their wisdom and strength; particularly the strength of their cavalry. The prophet, comparing the Egyptians in each respect with God, beats down the vanity of their carnal confidence; for, though the Egyptians were wise and powerful, yet he acquaints them that God was more wise and more powerful, who could never want understanding to conceive the most proper means, nor power to carry those means into execution. The prophet makes use of the figure called *meiosis*, expressing much less than is meant, when speaking of God he says, *Yet he also is wise*; and in the third verse, though he denies not the strength of the Egyptians, yet he sets forth the imbecility of that strength when compared with God.

*Ver. 4. For thus hath the Lord spoken unto me, &c.] For thus hath Jehovah spoken by me, &c. ver. 5. As birds hovering [over their young], so will the Lord of Hosts defend Jerusalem, defending and delivering it, protecting and rescuing it.* Men of a carnal worldly mind, who understood not the secret ways of God, often inferred against his promises delivered by the prophets, that, in certain cases, they waited in vain for the divine help: groaning under the Assyrian yoke, they had not experienced the present aid of God, no more than in many of their wars against the Syrians. Reason, therefore, required that they should seek their aid from more powerful people; in which pretence they dissembled the truth, which was, that they were wanting to God, not God to them; as they proudly rejected that condition of repentance and faith which the prophets joined to all their promises of grace. But that Isaiah might entirely beat down this exception, he here places before their eyes an example of the defence and deliverance which God would undoubtedly perform for his people in Sion, publicly to shew that neither *power* nor affection was wanting in God to protect those who truly repented and trusted only in him. This he illustrates by two similes: the first referring to strength and undaunted resolution, taken from *a lion roaring over his prey*, and unappalled by any opposition: *so*, he says, *would God fight for mount Zion, and for the hill thereof*; that is to say, for Moriah, upon which the temple

6 ¶ Turn ye unto *him* from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted.

7 For in that day every man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you for a sin.

8 ¶ Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a mighty man: and the sword,

not of a mean man, shall devour him: but he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be discomfited.

9 And he shall pass over to his strong hold for fear, and his princes shall be afraid of the ensign, saith the LORD, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.

temple was built. The other simile refers to his affection and care, and is taken from the care, solicitude, and affection of birds defending their young. The meaning of it is, that God would not only protect his people, as birds do their young by brooding over them, but also would keep them free from all danger, would deliver and avenge them, which is more than birds are able to perform. There is no need to refer to the history, as it has been done so often already. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 6, 7. Turn ye unto him*] This address of the prophet to the Jews is both *monitory* of the duty, without which this divine benefit of protection and deliverance would not be conferred, and *prophetical*, wherein he teaches, that God would offer to them, and that they would as a nation at that time receive the grace of repentance from idolatry, that they might obtain this blessing agreeably to the laws of divine Providence and grace. The admonition immediately respects the Jews, in opposition to the Ephraimites, strictly called *the children of Israel*; and the sense is this: "When, therefore, God shall grant unto you, Jews, the inhabitants of Sion and Jerusalem, the hope of so great a benefit, that he will protect you by his own right hand against the Assyrians, (which the prophet foretold should come to pass;) then *turn you in true repentance unto him*, from whom the Ephraimites, seeking help from Egypt, in contempt and neglect of his aid, have most *deeply revolted*; and place your confidence not in the Egyptians, but in Jehovah himself; which the Ephraimites have neglected to do. Nay, the more grievously they have sinned, and the further they have departed from God, so much the more sincerely do you repent, and unite yourselves the more closely to him." The prophet immediately adds, that this admonition should have its effect, and that the Jews, reduced to straits by the Assyrians, should *cast away* their domestic idols; and of course should cease to place any confidence in them; returning to their God, and trusting only in him. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 8, 9. Then shall the Assyrian fall*] The history of the Assyrian overthrow fully explains these verses. The meaning of the phrase, *His young men shall be discomfited*, is, that those of Sennacherib's soldiers who should escape in flight, should *melt through fear* in the way, and should be so dispersed and so distressed, that the greater part of them should perish. The first clause of the ninth verse should be read, *And he shall pass by his strong-hold in a fright*; that is, "Sennacherib shall be struck with so great fear, on account of the slaughter inflicted upon his army by God, and the report of the approach of *Tirbakah*, chap. xxvii. 9. that he shall in his flight pass by his fortifica-

tions in the borders of his empire, as not daring to trust himself to them." *And his princes shall be afraid of an ensign*; that is, "They shall be seized with such terror, that every ensign of war lifted up, shall cause consternation and fear to them." The latter clause refers to the perpetual fire which was kept up in the temple, which was a symbol of the Holy Spirit of God dwelling in the hearts of believers, and also of the holy and pure will of God, whereby every sacrifice offered to him was to be approved. See Vitringa.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Repeated woes are denounced to awaken the sinners in Zion; if still they persist in their wicked way, surely their blood will be on their own heads.

1. The charge laid against them, is their recourse to Egypt, and neglect of God. The numerous hosts of Pharaoh, his chariots and horsemen, seemed to afford greater security to the eye of sense than the word of promise; and therefore they are more solicitous to engage his friendship, than to spread their case before the Holy One of Israel. *Note*; They who consult with sense, take a bad guide.

2. The folly and danger of their conduct are exposed. If they wanted wisdom, lo! God is all wise, and they should consult him: if they wanted might, God was almighty, and could protect them; but when he was slighted and neglected, his wisdom and power, which might have been engaged for them, were armed against them: and what then can the wisdom or power of Egypt do to save them? he will counteract all the schemes of their allies, and execute the threatening that he hath pronounced against the workers of iniquity; and, by sad experience, they shall be taught the vanity of that strength of Pharaoh, which they idolized. The Egyptians shall be found men, frail, false, foolish, and not God, as they, by their confidence in them, seemed to make them, and their horses flesh and not spirit; and, therefore, when the Lord should stretch forth his hand, they and their unprofitable helpers would fall together. *Note*; (1.) They who affect to be wiser than their Bibles, will only in the end expose their own folly. (2.) The more we know of men, the more we shall see cause to cease from human dependance; the more we know of God, the more shall we be engaged to trust him. (3.) There are many truths evident and allowed by all, and yet, in practice, we are apt glaringly to contradict them. (4.) The sinner in the day of wrath shall find little comfort or help in his companion, when they shall fall together, and receive the reward of their iniquities.

3. Those in Zion, who, without having recourse to Egypt, trusted God for their safety, should find him a sure refuge

## C H A P. XXXII.

*The blessings of Christ's kingdom. Desolation is forebown.  
Restoration is promised to succeed.*

[Before Christ 713.]

**B**EHOLD, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment.

2 And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tem-

refuge in the day of calamity: as a lion seizing his prey, who cannot be intimidated by the shouting of the shepherds, who, daring not to approach him, seek to fright him with their noise; so impotent will be the army of the Assyrians, when the lion of the tribe of Judah shall come to fight for his Zion: swift as the eagle will he fly to their succour, and safe preserve them, when the destroying angel shall pass over to smite their enemies, and by their destruction deliver Jerusalem. *Note:* In the midst of danger they are safe whom God with tenderness unutterable covers under his wings as a hen gathereth her chickens, and defends with an arm of almighty and irresistible power. Oh, that we did but trust him!

2dly, We have,

1. A gracious call to repentance. God had not utterly cast them off, though they had basely forsaken him, and deeply revolted from him: he calls them children of Israel as a reproach for their ingratitude, to beget conviction of their baseness, and engage their hope; seeing, though they deserved to be disowned, he still regarded them in a national sense as his sons and daughters, and invited them to turn to him with assurances of kind acceptance. *Note:* It is never too late to return to God; the deepest revolters will find their king, on humble submission, ready to forgive.

2. A blessed reformation wrought. *In that day*, when their deliverance should appear so evidently the work of God's hand, they would cast away their idols of gold and silver, the work which their own hands had made: (so bent were they upon idolatry, that no cost or pains was spared; but) now their sin is their burden, and their idols detested and abhorred. *Note:* (1.) In a day of repentance our tempters to sin will be loathed more than ever they have been loved. (2.) Every man has by nature his peculiar idol lust, the indulgence of which will be his bitterest burden when God awakens his conscience, and against which he must place an especial guard.

3. A glorious victory obtained. The Assyrian shall fall, not by an arm of flesh, but by the immediate stroke of God: and, while the army is discomfited, their king in terrors shall flee, and his princes, the few who escape with him, shall pass over to his strong-hold for fear—his mighty warriors who were left halted to return, lest they should be pursued by the Jews in their flight, and dreading that fiery furnace of wrath which burns so hot against the enemies of Zion. *Note:* (1.) When God contends, he will overcome. (2.) If present judgments be so terrible, what must be the fire of hell, and the furnace of eternal wrath! (3.)

pest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

3 And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken.

4 The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly.

5 The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful.

The same God who is a consuming fire to his enemies, is a wall of fire around his people to protect them, and a fire of love within their hearts to comfort them.

## C H A P. XXXII.

*Ver. 1, 2. Behold, a king shall reign.* The prophet sets forth the two consequences of this gracious and glorious benefit; namely,—in these verses,—the flourishing and prosperous reign of Hezekiah, to shew forth itself at this time in all the authority and beauty of virtue and holiness, as a type of Jesus Christ, the most perfect king, who was to spring from him; such as he should shew himself in his kingdom, after having avenged his church by the rulers of the Roman empire, from the tyranny of Satan, opposing and endeavouring to extirpate it: and in ver. 3—8. he sets forth the repentance and conversion of many. There is no doubt that these words have their most complete and full verification in the Messiah. In ver. 2. we might read, *and that man*, namely, the king, shall be as a protection against the wind, &c.

*Ver. 3. And the eyes, &c.]* The prophet here goes on to set forth the prerogatives of this time and kingdom; which, however primarily they may refer to the reign of Hezekiah, must, in their full and complete sense, be referred to the reign of Christ. He says, that the demonstration of the divine glory, justice, and grace, should be so brightly displayed in this strange event of the Assyrian overthrow, and in other similar signs discovered at this time, (see chap. xxxviii.) that they who before hung in doubt respecting the care and providence of God to his people, as if dimness was before their eyes, should now be plainly convinced of his divine presence with his people, and of the certainty and efficacy of his aid. Their eyes should be opened, and their ears should, with reverent attention hear those truths concerning the divine interposition, which they had too little regarded from God's prophets heretofore.

*Ver. 4. The heart also of the rash]* *Of the inconsiderate.* The meaning of this verse is, that men of precipitate judgment, who had too inconsiderately passed their opinion concerning the administration of divine Providence, and had either unfortunately and unreasonably, or in a doubtful and involved manner, delivered their notion of God and his ways, should by this remarkable event be awakened to a right and perfect knowledge of the divine Providence, and should express their thoughts and faith, plainly, openly, and fully, without doubt or hesitation.

*Ver. 5—8. The vile person, &c.]* The meaning of this passage

6 For the vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the LORD, to make empty the soul of the hungry; and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail.

7 The instruments also of the churl are evil: he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right.

8 But the liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand.

9 ¶ Rise up, ye women that are at ease; hear my voice, ye careless daughters; give ear unto my speech:

10 Many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye careless women; for the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come.

11 Tremble, ye women that are at ease; be troubled, ye careless ones; strip you, and make you bare, and gird sackcloth upon your loins.

12 They shall lament for the teats, for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine.

13 Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city:

14 Because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left; the forts and towers shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks;

15 ¶ Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.

16 Then judgment shall dwell in the wil-

passage is, clearly, that, after the time of this great deliverance under the reign of a pious and just king, those things and persons which had appeared under false colours, should be called by their true names, and should be brought to light and appear in their true and proper colours. The 8th verse might be rendered, *But the liberal, or ingenuous deviseth, or consulteth for ingenuous things, and for ingenuous things will he stand*; that is, as an advocate and patron. The meaning is, that an ingenuous man, of a good mind, and a lover of the truth, will ingenuously explain his opinion concerning the works and ways of God, and the whole order of his providence, which the hypocrites so much maligned and misrepresented; and will strenuously defend those ways and works, as ever just and right, against all such unjust censurers. The Christian reader need not be told how exactly these particulars belong to his kingdom, who is a king reigning in righteousness; a hiding-place from the storm of sin and the world; John, xvi. 33. whose kingdom is a kingdom of light, of faith, of love; all whose subjects are enlightened with the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; who gave eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf, tongues to the dumb, and, by his divine grace, changed the most churlish and illiberal dispositions into generosity and love. See Vitringa.

Ver. 9, 10. *Rise up, ye women*] The prophet, to shew the sinners and hypocrites in Zion, (ch. xxxiii. 14.) that they must not build any false hopes of blessings from God, such as he had just now predicted, while in their state of impenitence,—denounces against them the calamities which, first by the Assyrian, ver. 9, 10. and then by the Babylonish destruction, ver. 11—14. should come upon them. By the *women at ease*, and *careless daughters*, are to be understood the cities and villages of Judæa, vainly confident in their present security; and he tells them, that, at a certain period, which he here calls a *day beyond a year*, the land of Canaan, not by the inclemency of the heavens, but by means of the desolation to be brought upon it by its ene-

mies, should deceive the common hope of its inhabitants, who enjoyed its fruits in plenty, and of the best kind, not for their necessities only, but also for their delights. There is great doubt respecting the phrase which we render *many days and years*; Vitringa thinks that it signifies *two years*, for it is literally, ימים על שנה *ianim al shanah, days above a year*; and that it denotes the time of the continuance of the calamity brought upon Judæa by Sennacherib. We may just observe, that the destroying of the vintage is a symbol of taking away all joy. See ch. xvi. 8.

Ver. 11—14. *Tremble, ye women*] Tremble, &c.—and gird sackcloth upon your loins, ver. 12. upon your breasts; lamenting for the pleasant field, for the fruitful vine: ver. 13. for the land, &c.—yea, for all the houses of joy; [for] the joyous city, ver. 14. Because the temple is deserted; the thronged city left; the cliff and watch-tower shall for a long season be for dens, &c. Vitringa. The prophet begins and proceeds in a more lofty tone than in the former passage, because the calamity here described, which is that of the desolation of the land, and of the city of Jerusalem by the Chaldees, should be much greater and more terrible than that brought upon them by the Assyrians. The meaning of the passage, and the gradations by which the prophet expresses this desolation, are rendered more clear by the version which Vitringa has given above. If we are to understand the first part of the 12th verse as it stands in our translation, the mothers must be meant, lamenting for the infants whom they suckled at their breasts, and who were destroyed at this time of common calamity. The entire devastation of the land, and its uncultivated state, are foretold in the 13th verse, as well as the depopulation of the towns and cities. The dereliction of the temple, and of the city of Jerusalem itself, is foretold in ver. 14. together with the ruin of those fortifications wherein much of their strength consisted; their ruin, not for ever, but for a long season; till the period mentioned in the next verse.

Ver. 15, 16. *Until the Spirit be poured upon us*] The prophet

derness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field.

17 And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

18 And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in

quiet resting-places;

19 When it shall hail, coming down on the forest; and the city shall be low in a low place.

20 Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth *thither* the feet of the ox and the ass.

prophet teaches, that the calamity which he had foretold should at length terminate, after a long delay, in excellent benefits to be conferred upon the people of God, as he had shewn in ch. xxix. 17, &c. and xxx. 19, &c. which are analogous to this. The benefits that he here enumerates are principally spiritual: and though the prophet, no doubt, in these words refers primarily to the blessings consequent upon the people's return from the Babylonish captivity; yet there can be no doubt that they likewise refer to the effusion of the Holy Spirit in the times of the Messiah, and the consequent conversion of the Gentile world; that *wilderness*, which, through grace, should be turned into a fruitful field. See ch. xxix. 17. Ezek. xxxvi. 24, &c. and Vitringa.

Ver. 19. *When it shall hail*] The prophet having, in the preceding verses, set forth the felicity of the church restored, could not pass by the divine judgment upon its enemies. By the *descent*, or *foot of the forest*, we understand that track of country which was beneath mount Libanus, and usually called Syria, together with the great cities situated in and about that valley; and the meaning of the prophet is, that the enemies of the people of God, such as the Syrians and Babylonians, who are to be considered also as types of the enemies of the church of Christ, should be punished by the divine judgments at that time when God should procure peace for his church.

Ver. 20. *Blessed are ye that sow, &c.*] The *wilderness* of the Gentile world was to be changed into a fruitful field; the prophet therefore foresaw it would come to pass, that the apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ, departing from Judæa, should, throughout the whole known world, and in the most celebrated and frequented parts of it, *sow the seed* of evangelical doctrine, and prepare the Gentiles to receive that seed by *spiritual discourse and instruction*, thereby eradicating the prejudices and superstitions inconsistent with the glory of Christ. He saw also, that after the kingdoms of the world were become Christian, the ministers of the word of grace, who had devoted themselves to that office, would promote the same work with great zeal, that the fulness of the Gentiles might come in, and the whole world be turned into the field and paradise of God: he therefore sees and praises them in this clause of his prophecy, blessing and extolling their labours, and obliquely exhorts them to proceed with all diligence and fervour in this pious and acceptable work. See chap. xxviii. 24, &c. and xxx. 24. There is no need to speak of the completion of this prophecy: the zeal of the apostles of Jesus Christ, the evangelists and first preachers, amidst a thousand obstacles and difficulties, was astonishingly great; nor was their success less, but rather great beyond all conception. Among these, for instance, how great is the praise of St. Paul! who does not boast vainly, that *he laboured more*

*abundantly than they all.* This great man so conducted himself, as if that whole vast *wilderness* of the Gentiles was committed to him by the divine command, to *plow*, to *sow*, and to subject it to Jesus Christ. What a spirit was in him! what diligence! what grace! He indeed *sowed truly, and plowed beside all waters!* O blessed apostle, chosen and sent upon so great a work, by the divine appointment! what our Isaiah, a figure of thee, would have done, thou, animated by the same evangelical spirit, hast completed. In the following ages of the church we want not striking instances of Christian zeal, though amid declining Christian virtue. If in the latter times ambition has more distinguished itself than zeal, it is our duty to rouse up in our own breasts some of that glowing zeal of better times, in which, alas! we are too deficient.

\* REFLECTIONS.—1st, Under Hezekiah's government the people enjoyed great blessings: himself a righteous governor; his princes copying his example; by them the oppressed were protected, the ignorant instructed, the law of God both taught and understood; and, as the consequence thereof, a right estimation made of the characters of men, as viewed in this glass of truth. And to this the prophecy primarily may refer; but we may say of it truly, a greater than Hezekiah is here.

1. The righteous government of Christ is foretold. *Behold*, with transport and joy, a king, the Lord upon his throne, *shall reign in righteousness*, protecting his people, and punishing his enemies; his laws most equitable, and his administration altogether righteous: *and princes shall rule in judgment*; those who are ordained by him to have rule in the church, who preach his Gospel, administer his ordinances, and execute their office according to his appointment.

2. His faithful people shall be saved from wrath by him. *A man, or that man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest*; by him the sinner's soul is sheltered from the storm of divine vengeance, which, by the interposition of his own body on the tree, he hath endured for us, and from the fiery darts of Satan, and the fierce temptations of sin, which else would overwhelm us: *as rivers of water in a dry place*: refreshing, quickening, and comforting the souls of his people, when parched up as the dry ground for want of rain; *as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land*; such a wearisome land the Christian pilgrim finds this world; and, scorched with the sultry beams of persecution, affliction, or temptation, must utterly fail but for this hospitable shadow, which Christ his rock spreads over him; there he feels support ministered, there he is hid in the hour of trial; and under this shadow, sitting with great delight, renews his strength.

3. Great



CHAP. XXXIII.

God's judgments against the enemies of the church. The privileges of the godly.

[Before Christ 713.]

**W**OE to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest trea-

cherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee.

2 O LORD, be gracious unto us; we have

3. Great light and knowledge shall be diffused. *The eyes of them that see shall not be dim*, but distinctly and abidingly discover the light of the glory of God in the Gospel of his dear Son; and *the ears of them that hear shall hearken*; earnest to search the Scriptures, and to obtain deeper discoveries of divine truth. *The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge*, to which they before paid no regard; and *the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly*, or *elegantly*, as when illiterate Galileans were endued with wisdom from above; or, as is still the case, when, by divine grace, the soul is led into the knowledge of the Gospel, and taught of the Spirit, and then even a child can speak more distinctly of the things of God, than the wisest unenlightened man.

4. Eminent discernment, to distinguish the characters of men, and fidelity to reprove, shall then be in the ministers of Christ; weighing persons in the balance of the sanctuary, they shall charge men's sins home upon their consciences: or the meaning may be, that then *the vile person* (נבל *Nabal*, a fool,) shall no more be called (נדיב *Nadib*, a prince), nor be put in trust with the Gospel, which his folly must disgrace; nor *the churl*, the covetous person, be called *bountiful* or *honourable*, since ignorance in understanding, and covetousness in temper, would be a scandal to the ministry. *For the vile person, or the fool, will speak villany, or folly*; advancing doctrines opposite to the oracles of wisdom, such as the natural rectitude of man, the merit of works, &c. and *his heart will work iniquity*, which is the natural fruit of false principles; *to practise hypocrisy*, pretending a regard for the interests of piety and religion, when most effectually sapping the foundations of true holiness; and *to utter error against the Lord*, denying the godhead, or debasing the glory of the Redeemer, *to make empty the soul of the hungry*, by withholding from them the bread of life; and *he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail*, by turning them away from the doctrines of the free and all-sufficient grace of God, the fountain of living waters, to the empty and broken cisterns of resolutions formed in man's self-sufficient strength. *The instruments also of the churl are evil*; his methods to gratify his covetousness, being more solicitous about his own gain than the good of the souls committed to him: *he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor, or afflicted, with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right things*; if any under concern for their souls come to inquire, he gives them bad advice how to get rid of their convictions, and heals the hurt slightly, contriving to prejudice them against those who were able to extricate them from their troubles in the way of grace and truth. Such is the character of a false and faithless minister: *but the liberal deviseth liberal things*; being possessed of a princely spirit, meet for a ruler in God's church: fraught with divine grace, and perhaps enjoying the blessings of Providence, he contrives how to be useful, dispensing the doc-

trines of the Gospel zealously; not for filthy lucre's sake, but of a willing mind, and is an example to believers in charity and liberality; and *by liberal things shall he stand, or be established*; his own spirit strengthened, and a blessing bestowed on his labours.

2dly, We have,

1. A warning of approaching judgments, directed to the daughters of Zion, whose wantonness, pride, and vanity, had contributed to fill up the measure of the nation's iniquities. They are represented as *careless*, or *confident*, and *at ease*, without any concern, either about their sin or danger; but they are called to hear the word of God and tremble, and, by an immediate humiliation, to prevent, if possible, the impending wrath of the Almighty, or prepare to meet it. Heavy is the threatened judgment; the vintage failing through drought, or consumed by the enemy; the pastures ravaged, or withered away, so that the kine should not give their milk; the land desolate, and producing only briars and thorns; their joyous houses, where mirth and pleasure reigned, ruined; the palaces forsaken, the city deserted, the fortifications mouldering away, and Zion become the den of beasts and wild asses, while flocks graze in the streets, once crowded with inhabitants, and this desolation abiding *for ever*: which directs us to apply this catastrophe not only to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, but to the final ruin it afterwards underwent, and in which it lies to this day. *Note*; (1.) When men live carelessly and at ease in their sins, death will come upon them with a terrible surprize. (2.) They who have abused their plenty by pride and excess, are justly made to feel the miseries of want. (3.) The only way to prevent our eternal sorrows, is by a timely regard to God's warnings, and by present humiliation for our sins. (4.) They who continue impenitent will quickly experience an awful change, when their houses of joy and pleasure must be quitted for an abode in everlasting burnings, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.

2. A promise of future blessings: which looks forward to the latter days of the Gospel dispensation: for so long will Jerusalem be trodden down of the Gentiles, Luke, xxi. 24.

(1.) *The Spirit shall be poured out from on high*; from heaven, as on the day of Pentecost; and this shall be again abundantly the case in the last days, when Jews and Gentiles shall be converted, and made one fold under one shepherd. *Note*; The desolations of every fallen soul would for ever continue, if the Spirit from on high were not poured out to convert and renew the heart of the sinner.

(2.) A mighty change shall be produced by his divine power. *The wilderness shall be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest*; the world, which was a wilderness, full of impiety and iniquity, now, by grace renewed,

waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble.

3 At the noise of the tumult the people fled; at the lifting-up of thyself the nations were scattered.

shall bring forth fruits of righteousness and true holiness; and numerous converts, thick as the trees of the forest, be added to the church daily. *Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness*; the word of God, and the doctrines according to godliness, be received and embraced by those who before were utterly ignorant of them, or at enmity against them; and *righteousness remain in the fruitful field*, increasing in every divine temper and disposition. *And the work of righteousness shall be peace*; the work of divine grace, which the Spirit works in the heart, shall produce peace, as the evidence of our reconciliation with God; and *the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever*; for if truly interested in the Redeemer, no troubles need disturb us; it is our privilege to rest satisfied in him, and, with unshaken confidence, expect the constant supplies of his grace, strength, and consolations on earth, and the possession of the inheritance purchased for us in glory everlasting. *And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places*, the enmity between Jews and Gentiles being utterly abolished, their foes of earth and hell restrained from disturbing their repose, and none to make them afraid; *when it shall hail, coming down on the forest*; the storm of wrath being poured on the ungodly, see Rev. xvi. 21. and the seat of antichristian oppression and tyranny laid in the dust. Rev. xviii. *Note*; (1.) Wherever the Spirit of God is poured out on a soul, immediately the fruit will be holiness to the Lord. (2.) A clear discovery and divine persuasion of the all-sufficiency of the Redeemer's mediation, is the solid ground of peace within; and whilst our souls fix on this alone, we may rest assured that there neither is nor can be any condemnation. (3.) Whenever the soul makes mention of his grace and righteousness only, both atoning and sanctifying, then will the heart experience most abundantly the transforming power of divine grace, and grow like him from whom cometh our salvation. (4.) Whatever troubles may attempt to disturb our present repose; if we be found in Christ, we know for our comfort there is a mansion of eternal rest provided for his faithful redeemed. (5.) When storms of vengeance descend on the ungodly, they, who have fled for refuge to the hope set before them, and dwell in Christ, are sure to be hid in the day of his fierce anger.

(3.) An especial blessing is promised to the ministers of God, and their labours: as diligent husbandmen cast their seed on well-watered lands, and see it springing up so fast that their cattle are let in to crop it, or at harvest bring home the corn; so shall the word of God be in their mouths, quickened by the Spirit, producing an abundant harvest of souls, in whom they see the fruit of their labours; and who will be their crown and rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus. *Note*; They who *sew beside all waters*, that is, take every opportunity of doing good, shall find God not unrighteous to forget their works of faith and labours of love.

#### C H A P. XXXIII.

THE third and last part of the third section of this

discourse, is comprised in the present chapter; which is immediately connected with that preceding, and in some respect explanatory of it. The former part contains a proposition or summary enarration, wherein we have, *first*, a prophetic denunciation directed to a great destroyer, in which the divine judgment is intimated to him as if present, by the prophet; ver. 1. *Secondly*, an apostrophe, *first*, to GOD, both *supplicatory*, wherein his aid is implored with respect to the whole church, and to some particular persons who had undertaken an expedition for the safety of the rest; ver. 2. and also *declaratory* of the glorious event granted by God to these prayers: ver. 3. *Secondly*, to the conquered *enemies*, containing the desired consequence of the victory to the church, ver. 4. *Thirdly*, *doxological* again to GOD, celebrating the benefits conferred upon the church, ver. 5. and *fourthly*, *mnemonic* to the brethren, concerning the means of preserving the divine favour now obtained: ver. 6. The latter part, or the exposition, contains, *first*, an enarration of a great calamity to be brought upon the people of God by a *spoiler*; ver. 7—9. *Secondly*, the benefit of deliverance, and of the punishment of the enemy, to be conferred upon the church; ver. 10—12. *Thirdly*, the celebration of this benefit, with a defence of the justice of God, ver. 13—16. *Fourthly*, remarkable blessings to be conferred by God upon the delivered church; among which are, the glorious presence of a king and ruler in that church, ver. 17, 18.; freedom from enemies, ver. 19.; the duration of that state, to be absorbed by the new œconomy, ver. 20.; the immediate kingdom of God over the church, ver. 21, 22.; the weak state of the enemy, compared with the firmness and felicity of the state of the people of God, ver. 23, 24. This part also, like the former, consists of continued apostrophes, directed to those objects whose attributes are described; and the apostrophes in each part very well suit to a chorus or company of the elders of the church, whom our prophet may be supposed to represent. It is generally thought, that the *spoiler* here intended is Sennacherib; though Vitranga is of opinion, that Antiochus Epiphanes is rather referred to. It is possible the prophecy may have a two-fold reference to each; and in its mystical sense both to antichrist and Satan.

*Ver. 1. Woe to thee that spoilest, &c.*] The prophet so orders his discourse, as if he had found this great *spoiler* to whom it is directed, in the very act of spoiling, and face to face denounces the divine judgment upon him. He addresses him therefore with the hateful appellation of *perfidious spoiler* and robber, and declares to him the decrees of the divine avenging justice, to be inflicted upon him according to the strict laws of retaliation. History abounds with the names of the mighty spoilers, robbers, and murderers of mankind, great heroes and warriors. One of these was Sennacherib, (see chap. xxxvii. 18.) to whom this denunciation may with great propriety be applied; but with still greater to Antiochus Epiphanes, the most inveterate enemy of the people of God, who brought a much more extensive and fearful desolation upon them

4 And your spoil shall be gathered like the gathering of the caterpillar: as the running to and fro of locusts shall he run upon them.

5 The LORD is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness.

6 And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the LORD is his treasure.

7 Behold, their valiant ones shall cry with-

out: the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly.

8 The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth: he hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth no man.

9 The earth mourneth and languisheth: Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down: Sharon is like a wilderness; and Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits.

10 Now will I rise, saith the LORD; now

them than Sennacherib; and the consequences related in the latter part of this chapter seem to refer most properly to the times succeeding his devastation. See Ezek. xxxviii. Dan. viii. 13. 24. and Vitringa.

Ver. 2, 3. *O Lord, be gracious unto us*] In this apostrophe to God, the first part contains the supplication; the other, the salvation obtained in consequence thereof. In the supplication there is that difference of persons which shews that they prayed both for the present and absent: for the *present* and the whole community in these words, *Be gracious unto us*; for the *absent*, *Be thou their arm every morning*. They who pour forth this supplication suppose part of their community to be absent; that is to say, according to our hypothesis, the zealots, who under the command of the Maccabees went forth to fight in defence of their state and religion, while the weaker part of the true worshippers of God remained in deserts, and caves, and other hiding-places. The meaning of the next verse is, that upon the display of God's interposing power, and wonderful succour granted to his people, their enemy fled, and they obtained the victory. There is a remarkable passage in Zech. ix. 13, 14. respecting the Maccabees, which well explains this; and very agreeable to it are the words of Judas, *The victory of battle standeth not in the multitude of an host; but strength cometh from heaven*: see 1 Mac. iii. 19. iv. 32. 1 Sam. vii. 10. and Vitringa.

Ver. 4. *And your spoil shall be gathered*] In this apostrophe to the enemy, we have the consequence of their overthrow; which should be the collection of their spoils, without order or distinction; just as locusts, without order or fear, run over the fields and plunder them, every one of them claiming to itself what it first seizes. There are some who understand the first clause thus, *Your spoil shall be gathered, as the caterpillar is gathered*; that is to say, as the husbandmen collect them from their plants, &c. to destroy them; but others, and with more propriety, understand them as expressive of the depredations of the caterpillars themselves. Concerning the depredations of locusts we have had occasion to speak heretofore. See ver. 23. and 1 Mac. iv. 23.

Ver. 5. *The Lord, &c.*] *JEHOVAH is exalted; yea, he dwelleth on high*. Lowth. See Psal. xcix.

Ver. 6. *And wisdom and knowledge, &c.*] *And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, the possession of continued salvation: the fear of JEHOVAH, this shall be thy treasure*. Lowth. Vitringa supposes this apostrophe

to be directed to the prince or head of the nation, wherein the prophet teaches him, and consequently the people, in what manner that prosperity and felicity are to be preserved which the Lord had conferred upon them. He shews, that the only way to preserve the state in prosperity is by *wisdom, and knowledge, and the fear of the Lord*; these are the support of a state, the stability of prosperous times, the strength and riches of perfect salvation, and *the hidden good, the treasure* to be preferred to all others; which when found in a state, that state is rich and stable. See Prov. viii. 18. Though this is to be understood of the times of the Maccabees, yet the blessings of those times are to be considered as having their full completion only in the spiritual blessings of the day of grace. Nothing is more true, than that this is commended as the chief prerogative in the kingdom of grace, where nothing is of equal estimation with wisdom, knowledge, the faith and fear of God: on these depend all other blessings; these are the only true treasures enriching mankind. See Vitringa.

Ver. 7—9. *Behold, their valiant ones*] *Behold their valiant ones, they cry without: the ambassadors of peace, they weep bitterly*. Ver. 8. *The highways lie desolate; the traveller ceaseth: he hath broken, &c.* Ver. 9. *Lebanon is ashamed, withers away: Sharon is become like a wilderness, &c.* The prophet, seeing as it were immediately before his eyes, that spoiling and devastation of the land of the people of God mentioned ver. 1. seeing it with all its consequences, such as the desolation of the public ways, the infrequency of travellers, the uncultivated state of the withering and mourning fields, the deplorable sterility of the most fruitful places, such as Bashan, Carmel, Sharon, together with a remarkable circumstance of this devastation, namely, the public lamentation of the heroes *without Jerusalem*, and the bitter lamentation of the messengers of peace; that is to say, of the leaders and priests in the times of the Maccabees; seeing all this in vision, he prints it to the life, and gives in these verses the most lively description of it. Nothing can more exactly agree to the universal desolation in the land of Canaan by Antiochus, than this description. See 1 Mac. i.

Ver. 10—12. *Now will I rise, saith the Lord*] We are taught in this period, that when the calamity of the people, as well as the insolence of their enemies, should be full, God would interpose, and severely punish the oppressors; for that this was the true and proper time wherein he had determined

will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself.

11 Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath, as fire, shall devour you.

12 And the people shall be as the burnings of lime: as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire.

13 ¶ Hear, ye *that are* far off, what I have done; and ye *that are* near, acknowledge my might.

14 The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?

15 He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil;

16 He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.

17 Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off.

18 Thine heart shall meditate terror. Where is the scribe? where is the receiver? where is he that counted the towers?

determined to exalt his glory before the eyes of the nations. When this time should come, he would no longer delay, or endure the pride and arrogance of his enemies; on the contrary, all their counsels should vanish into smoke, and they themselves should shortly be consumed by the divine judgment. The last clause in the 11th verse may be rendered, *Your breath shall be the fire that shall consume you*: the meaning of it is, that the arrogance, pride, rage, and blasphemies which they vented against God, should be their destruction. *The people shall be as the burnings of lime*, ver. 12. means, that they should be reduced to nothing, or burned by the wrath of God, like stone burned in a lime-kiln. The metaphor is expressive of that severe indignation of God which should utterly destroy them, as the fire of a burning furnace reduces a stone, and entirely changes its form.

Ver. 13—16. *Hear, ye that are far off*] This period is immediately connected with that preceding; wherein the divine judgment just mentioned is celebrated, and its severity defended against those hypocrites who misinterpreted it. The prophet, using still the same figure, adapts words to God agreeable to the present circumstance. He supposes that God had now executed that judgment upon his enemies, which in the words preceding he had said that he would execute. Here, therefore, as the order required, he introduces God; *first*, as inviting the people near and afar off, Jews and Gentiles, wisely to consider this display of the divine judgment, that they might either be brought to a belief in the truth of God, or might be confirmed in that truth, and learn in future wholly to confide in it, ver. 13. And *secondly*, as defending this judgment against the murmurs and whispers of hypocrites who maliciously traduced it: ver. 14, &c. For they said, that these remarkable judgments afforded not an argument for men to desire communion with this God; but on the contrary deterred from such communion: for who could seek and love a God whose severity was so great, whose punishments so rigid? Who would not rather fly from and abhor him? for he was a *devouring fire*, whom it was not wise to approach, if we wished to avoid destruction. The prophet,

in the name of God himself, to give the greater weight to his words, refutes these calumnies. He teaches, that God is not terrible but to the wicked, to men of corrupt minds and consciences; that he is thoroughly amiable to the just and good; for that he loves from his own nature truth and holiness and virtue, and will reward them most amply. Such men may pass unhurt in the nearest communion with God; they may be cherished, purified, inflamed by God, as a fire, to the love of his perfection, and be, as it were, changed into the substance of the like purity, and yet not consumed; nay, *God is to them that seek him a rock of defence*; he is their security and protection, as well as the gracious supplier of all necessaries, to their present being and comfort, and their future happiness. This is the sum of the present passage; which however, in a mystical sense, may undoubtedly refer to the terrors of that future and devouring fire prepared for the sinners and hypocrites in Sion; as may the 15th and 16th verses to the future blessedness of those who obey the commandments of their God.

Ver. 17, 18. *Thine eyes shall see the king, &c.*] By the king to be seen in his beauty, Vitringa understands God himself, the king of the Jews, shewing himself with the brightest demonstrations of his majesty, in the deliverance and salvation of his believing people; temporal, under the Maccabees; spiritual, in and by the Messiah. For the ancient prophets generally speak of these two conjointly; because the external deliverance and salvation by the Maccabees was a type of the spiritual deliverance to be procured by the Messiah. The meaning of the verse is, that the people, thus delivered, should see and acknowledge their God and king, as the great judge and avenger, the sole support and protector of their church; and should behold their land extended; that is to say, no longer shut up and confined by their enemies, but extending its limits. See chap. xxvi. 15. The clause should be rendered, *They shall behold the land which is of a large extent*. He adds in the next verse, *Thine heart shall meditate terror*, or, *the terror*; that is to say, the terrible effect of the divine power and justice in the destruction of his enemies, which no

19 Thou shalt not see a fierce people, a people of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive; of a stammering tongue *that thou canst not understand.*

20 Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle *that shall not be taken down*: not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.

21 But there the glorious LORD *will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams*;

wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.

22 For the LORD *is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king*; he will save us.

23 Thy tacklings are loosed; they could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail: then is the prey of a great spoil divided; the lame take the prey.

24 And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein *shall be forgiven their iniquity.*

mortal could have thought of, or have collected from his own reason? *Where is the scribe?* that is to say, "The man of carnal and worldly wisdom?" *Where is the weigher, the balancer?* that is to say, "The man of exercised understanding;" who is accustomed to weigh, in the balance of his judgment, the reasons of every thing, and is held more prudent than others? *Where is he that counteth the towers?* that is to say, "The subtle logician, who produces various arguments for the opinion which he espouses, and by these fortifies and strengthens his reasonings?" Our prophet calls arguments of this kind, *strengths, strong arguments*, chap. xli. 21. This worldly wisdom, says the prophet, God hath confounded and put to shame, by saving his church, contrary to the expectation of all such men. They thought that there was no hope of salvation left; or if there were any, that it was to be sought for from other causes, and effected by other means. But God hath confounded and put to shame the wisdom of the wise. The three benefits referred to in these verses,—seeing God in his beauty—the land and church extended—and carnal wisdom put to shame, evidently refer to the Gospel period. See Luke i. 51, 52. 1 Cor. i. 20. and Vitringa.

*Ver. 19. Thou shalt not see a fierce people*] While the people of God should see the king in his beauty, while they should see their land widely extending itself, they should no more see a barbarous enemy, or one of a stammering tongue and foreign speech, which they could not understand. They should be freed from a cruel and troublesome enemy, whose aspect and commerce had been a terror to them. Compare Dan. viii. 23. where Antiochus Epiphanes is called a *king of fierce countenance*; and see Jer. v. 15. This, likewise, though primarily referring to the times of the Maccabees, has, mystically, its full completion only in the œconomy of the Gospel.

*Ver. 20. Look upon Zion*] The prophet here, representing the chorus of teachers comforting the people of God, commands this people to turn their attention to Jerusalem, after its restoration flourishing greatly; and promises to them the durable stability of that state, under the metaphor of a *tent sustaining itself by stakes and cords* against winds and storms, and affording a safe and secure shelter to those within it. In this passage he is generally thought to refer to the spiritual Jerusalem; that is to say, to the church of the New Testament, which should be the

last dispensation of grace. At least, if the state of Jerusalem under the Maccabees be referred to in the letter, there can be no doubt of its secondary and typical reference to the church of Jesus Christ, founded on the day of Pentecost.

[*Ver. 21, 22. But there the glorious Lord, &c.*] *But the glorious name of JEHOVAH shall be unto us a place of confluent streams, of broad waters.* Lowth. Our prophet always rises in his figures: the meaning of those in this second period is, that the church, at the time here specified, shall immediately depend upon God alone. He alone shall be acknowledged, worshipped, celebrated as the true King, Teacher, Judge, and Saviour of his church: he alone shall be esteemed excellent; and under his protection the people shall enjoy an abundance of all things, in the utmost security from any hostile incursions. To express which, the prophet compares the church to a city, built in a happy country, near rivers and streams, in which no great and mighty, that is, no *warlike or commanding ship*, except that of Jehovah's, should be seen: this seems to be the genuine meaning of the figure. See ch. xxx. 25. li. 3. 1 Mac. xiv. 8.

*Ver. 23, 24. Thy tacklings are loosed*] Two things are to be supposed in the interpretation of these words; *first*, that this apostrophe is directed to the government of the hostile nation: *secondly*, when the state is described under the image of a ship, *whose tacklings are loosed*, we are to understand it in a bad sense. The metaphor in the 23d verse is taken from a ship; and the meaning of it is, that the public means and supplies, which sustain the state of the nation, or the prince who represents that state, are wanting, broken to pieces, or become useless; the consequence whereof is, the desolation of that state; whose weakness is so great, that even *the lame carry off the prey*: a parabolic phrase like that in 2 Sam. v. 6. The prophet adds, *And he that lieth down, shall not say, I am sick: because the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.* Which words, Vitringa thinks, are not to be connected with the 23d verse, but with the whole prophecy; Isaiah herein declaring that the state of that city of God, that *Zion* whereof he is speaking, shall admit no languor or disease, no spiritual disease; because the Spirit of God at that time shall rejoice in the blessing of *forgiveness of sins*. See Psal. ciii. 3. and Joel. iii. 10. This passage has its full completion in the New Testament.

REFLEC-

## C H A P. XXXIV.

*The judgments wherewith God revengeth his church. The desolation of her enemies. The certainty of the prophesy.*

[Before Christ 713.]

**C**OME near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear,

and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it.

2 For the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The subject of this prophesy is variously interpreted; some refer it to the state of the Jews under Hezekiah, when Sennacherib distressed them and was destroyed; others to the desolations made by Antiochus, and to the victorious arms of the Maccabees over him; others to the church of Christ oppressed by the antichristian foe, and to the final ruin of antichrist; and all these may be comprehended herein, and the former deliverances of God's church prefigure those of the latter day. See the Critical Annotations. Here is,

1. The woe denounced on the spoiler and treacherous dealer: for a while his politics would succeed, and his power prevail, however cruelly or unjustly exercised; but God will return his evil upon his own head, and at the appointed time visit upon him his wickedness: and this was the case with Sennacherib and Antiochus, as it will be of the Romish antichrist, whose politics, craft, and deceivableness of unrighteousness, are well known; and by these, long did he make a prey of men's goods, bodies, and souls; but at last God will visit him according to his deserts. See Rev. xvii. 12—16. *Note;* (1.) To compass their ends, the wicked hesitate not at falsehood, fraud, or violence; but God knows how to repay them in their own coin. (2.) There are appointed bounds to set to men's wickedness; and when they have filled up the measure of their iniquities, God will awake to judgment.

2. The people of God in prayer fly to him in the day of their calamity. *O Lord, be gracious unto us*, interpose to save us from every enemy; *we have waited for thee*, not fainting in the time of adversity, but expecting thy salvation: *be thou their arm every morning*; which either is a request for Hezekiah and his princes, or for the Maccabees, that they might be strengthened for their work; or rather it is the intercession of the members of the church one for another, every morning offered, for grace to enable them for the work of every day: *be thou our salvation also in the time of trouble*, from all the persecutions and distress under which in body or soul we groan, being burdened. *Note;* (1.) When we have a gracious God to go to, there is comfort under every affliction. (2.) They who cleave to him will never be forsaken by him. (3.) Every morning our prayer must be renewed, for every day we may expect fresh trials, and need renewed supports, for we have no power as of ourselves to help ourselves. (4.) We must be advocates for each other, and especially remember in our prayers those who are afflicted. (5.) The stronger the storm of temptation blows, the faster should we cling to the rock of our salvation.

3. An answer of peace is given. Their enemies, the Assyrians, shall be terrified before the destroying angel; and while some flee, and more are slain, they have nothing to do but rush on the spoil without resistance, as when a

flight of locusts devours the field. Or this may be applied still more properly to the Maccabees and their conquests. And thus shall it be in the last days, when the ruin of the antichristian armies is completed, the conquerors shall devour the spoil. See Rev. xvii. 16. *Note;* God not only answers our prayer, but often exceeds all our expectations.

4. The people of God celebrate the praises of their deliverer; they adore him for the manifestation of his glory, made in the destruction of the Assyrians, or of the enemies of Judah under the Maccabees, and for the blessed effects which his mercy produced among themselves, filling Zion with judgment and righteousness. From what they had experienced, they encourage Hezekiah and the Maccabees to proceed in their pious works of reformation, since wisdom and knowledge of God's will and worship, by their care diffused, would be the stability of their times, and the blest means of securing their present happy state, and the strength of salvation, their security against every invader: and the fear of the Lord, either in their own hearts, or in the hearts of the people, is his treasure; a better portion, and a surer protection against their enemies, than all other riches: such will also be the praises ascribed to their Redeemer, when the antichristian foe is fallen, and the kingdom of Christ eminently established; then wisdom and knowledge will be abundantly diffused, and those times be blessed with durable peace and joy, and the hearts of God's people enriched with the best treasure, even the fear and love of God. *Note;* (1.) Wherever the kingdom of Jesus is established in any heart, there justice towards men, and righteousness towards God, will immediately take place. (2.) A true knowledge of the grace of God is the great stability of the soul. (3.) The fear of God is the christian's best treasure.

2dly, When the eternal Jehovah speaks, let every mortal hear, and all the world acknowledge his power and glory; which appear especially,

1. In the terror and destruction of the wicked and the hypocrite. As the sinners and hypocrites in Zion have peculiar guilt, they may well tremble at their full measure of judgment: when they see Jerusalem ready to be besieged, and expect to have their houses fired, they are in distraction, have no hope in God, and Egypt hath failed them; or when they saw the Assyrians so terribly consumed, they trembled lest the devouring fire should also reach them. *Note;* (1.) Of all men they are most guilty, who amidst the light of Gospel-truth persist in the ways of sin and formality. (2.) The day will come when the most secure sinner will be startled. (3.) If men would seriously put the question to their souls, how they can dwell with devouring fire, and endure the everlasting burnings, it might awaken their consciences, and prevent their ruin. (4.) This terrible portion must they shortly and surely receive, who neglect to fly from the wrath to come

3 Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcases, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood.

come to that Redeemer who alone can hide them in the day of judgment.

2. In the salvation of the righteous, whose character is here displayed—*He that walketh righteously*, making God's word his rule, conscientious in all his dealings, and persevering in the worship of the Lord; *and speaketh uprightly*, his word is sacred, his conversation gracious, and suited to minister edification to others: *he that despiseth the gain of oppressions*, who thinks it infamous to fatten upon the spoil of the injured, and mean as wicked to commit injustice; *that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes*; rejects them, when offered, with indignation; *that stoppeth his ears from bearing of blood*, cannot be brought to listen to any cruel or oppressive proposal; *and shutteth his eyes from seeing evils*, cannot bear to see others sin, and stops up that dangerous avenue at which temptation might enter: *he shall dwell on high secure in the love of God from all those evils which terrify the wicked: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks*, even Christ the rock of ages, the impregnable fortress of the faithful soul, against which the gates of hell, and the floods of temptation, rage in vain; *bread shall be given him*, and *his waters shall be sure*; when famine rages, he shall not want in the siege, or under any distress; or rather he shall eat the living bread, of which the world knoweth not, and be refreshed with the streams of divine love and consolation, when the sinner and hypocrite in flames cannot obtain one drop of water to quench their raging thirst.

3. Many great and distinguishing mercies are here promised, applicable not only to the Jews, but more generally to all the faithful.

(1.) They shall see the king in his beauty, the great Jehovah in his glory, and *the land that is very far off*—their land extended, and their limits enlarged. And how much greater joy will it afford to faithful souls, in that distant realm of eternal day, to see Jesus, their king, brighter than the sun, sitting on the throne of glory, and themselves as stars shining around him?

(2.) Their fears shall be at an end, and serve them but for matter of grateful meditation; the terrors that compassed them are fled; they hear no more the voice of commanders within, collecting the supplies, or numbering the people for the battle, or the captains and engineers without, threatening their ruin. They see no longer a fierce nation, whose speech they could not understand, and whose voice spread dismay. Thus when our souls shall reach the heavenly Zion, our past trials, however grievous, shall be remembered with delight; and all our foes, which bred in us so many fears, be for ever sunk in darkness, and incapable of ever more troubling our repose.

(3.) They shall look with transport on Zion, the city of their solemnities: during their great distresses these had been interrupted, and they might fear never would be restored; but lo, once more in peace, their habitation is quiet, and God promises long to preserve his tabernacle among them, and to disappoint the malice of those who

should seek to destroy it. The earthly Zion, indeed, is long since demolished; but we look for a city which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God, even the new Jerusalem, to which this prophecy hath especial regard; where God's saints night and day shall serve him, and go out no more for ever, having found their glorious rest, and dwelling safe from fear of evil. See Rev. iii. 12.

(4.) They shall have the Lord, glorious in power and holiness, for their protector, law-giver, judge, and Saviour. Though Jerusalem had no navigable river to further commerce, or serve for a security against their enemies, God would be all that to her in his blessing; no galley, or gallant ship, could bring an invading army against her; and inaccessible would he preserve her from every foe: their judge to avenge his people's wrongs; their lawgiver to direct their conduct; their king to govern with gentleness, and protect them from danger; in short, their Saviour to the uttermost. *Note*; (1.) If God be ours, all things are ours. (2.) The Lord Christ is this judge, law-giver, king, and Saviour, to his faithful people; and if, as his subjects, our souls are yielded up to his government, who can pluck us out of his hands?

(5.) Their enemies, like a ship in a storm, dismasted, and the rigging torn in pieces, a perfect wreck, and ready to be dashed in pieces against the rocks, should see all their hopes blasted, and themselves a prey; so helpless to defend themselves, that even the lame should divide their spoil.

(6.) Sickness shall be removed, and sin pardoned. The diseases of Jerusalem, arising from their various distresses, would be at an end; and the people, returning to God under a sense of divine mercy, obtain pardon and acceptance with him: and this will be emphatically fulfilled in the days of the church's prosperity; when, with the pardon and grace then abundantly dispensed, Christ will heal all the sickness of the souls of his faithful people; and at last, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life, sin, sorrow, sickness, pain, and death shall be for ever banished from the eternal state of bliss and glory.

#### CHAP. XXXIV.

THE third discourse of the third part of Isaiah's prophecies, is contained in this and the subsequent chapter; which are connected with that preceding, and were delivered, probably, at the same time with it. The first section—contained in this chapter—exhibits the judgment upon the adversaries of the church, and particularly upon Edom; the latter—in chap. xxxv. the jubilee of the church, and its happy flourishing state. The first action resolves itself into two members; the former member contains a general prophecy against the nations which persecuted the church; wherein we have, *first*, a judicial convocation of all people to hear the sentence of the divine tribunal upon these nations, ver. 1.; *secondly*, the sentence itself set forth and illustrated from its cause and effects, ver. 2—4. The second member contains a special prophecy concerning Edom; wherein we have the *sentence* against Edom, ver. 5—15. and the confirmation of that sentence, ver. 16—17. The

4 And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree.

5 For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment.

6 The sword of the LORD is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams: for the LORD hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea.

7 And the unicorns shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness.

8 For it is the day of the LORD's vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion.

9 And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch.

10 It shall not be quenched night nor day: the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste: none shall pass through it for ever and ever.

11 But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it: and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness.

12 They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none shall be there, and all her princes shall be nothing.

13 And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof: and it shall be an habitation of dragons, and a court for owls.

14 The wild beasts of the desert shall also

*sentence itself is two-fold; first, concerning the terrible vengeance to be taken by God upon Edom, with the destruction of great and small, rich and poor, ver. 5—8.; secondly, concerning the full and everlasting desolation of that land, which is variously set forth, ver. 9—15. Vitringa is of opinion, that by all the nations and Edom, we are not to understand the nations and Edomites of antiquity, though the prophet's figure and ideas are drawn thence; but rather the nations which opposed or shall oppose the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and some particular people of those nations; namely, Rome, red or drunken with the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus.*

*Ver. 1. Come near, &c.] Draw near, O ye nations, and hearken; and attend unto me, O ye peoples! Let the earth hear, and the fulness thereof; the world, and all that spring from it. Lowth. As the prophet here directs his discourse to all the inhabitants of the earth, properly speaking, and not figuratively, as elsewhere, (ch. i. 2.) By the fulness of the earth, we must understand men, who replenish it; and their offspring by all that come forth of it.*

*Ver. 2—4. For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations] For the wrath of JEHOVAH is kindled against all the nations; and his anger against all the orders thereof; he hath devoted them; he hath given them up to slaughter; and their slain shall be cast out; and from their carcases their stink shall ascend; and the mountains shall melt down with their blood. Lowth. This sentence upon the nations is sufficient to strike terror into every hearer. It exhibits a kind of general judgment, to be executed upon the enemies of the kingdom of God by the sword of God; that is to say, by the princes and heroes to be raised up by God for the destruction of the enemies of his church: this is repeated, ver. 5. But further the prophet sets before our eyes a*

horrid tempest, raging furiously; whereby the heavens contract blackness, the sun disappears, the stars seem to fall to the earth, as if the whole body of the heavens was about to be utterly dissolved. We have had occasion frequently to observe, that in the prophetic language the heavenly luminaries represent kings and empires. It is not improbable, that the prophet here refers to that destruction of the Jewish state and polity, which our Saviour foretold under the same figures. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 5—8. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven] The meaning of this period is, that on a certain day of judgment, which is elsewhere called the great day of the Lord's vengeance, a mighty slaughter shall be made of the hardened enemies of the church, a long time oppressed and afflicted by them, with the effusion of much blood, and the destruction of many great, noble, and powerful men. The figure is taken from the master of a family, who, preparing a great feast, and a sacrifice, finds it necessary to slay many lambs, rams, and fatted animals, so that his knife may be said to be inebriated with the blood and fat of the slain. The passage is clear enough in this view. The meaning of the phrase, My sword shall be bathed, or inebriated in heaven, is, "It shall be sharpened or made ready in heaven, to bathe itself on earth." The verse may be rendered, When my sword in heaven is bathed, behold, it shall sink deep into Idumea, into the people whom I have devoted to destruction. In ver. 7. instead of unicorns, Bishop Lowth reads wild goats, which, together with the bullocks, &c. should come down to be sacrificed in the land of Idumæa. The place of this sacrifice is said to be Bozrah, which was a city of Edom, (see ch. lxiii. 1.) and both Bozrah and Idumæa are, as the whole context shews, to be taken figuratively. See Rev. vi. 15. xix. 17, 18. Vitringa is of opinion, as we before*



meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow; the screech owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest.

15 There shall the great owl make her nest, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her shadow: there shall the vultures also be gathered, every one with her mate.

16 ¶ Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them.

17 And he hath cast the lot for them, and his hand hath divided it unto them by line: they shall possess it for ever, from generation to generation shall they dwell therein.

before remarked, that Rome and the Roman power are here meant; and he observes, that *Rome*, which in the Hebrew signifies *fortification*, well answers to *Bozrah*, which signifies a *fortified city*. See Deut. iii. 5. in the Hebrew. Instead of, *for the controversy of Zion*, some read, *for the avenging of, or to avenge Zion*.

*Ver. 9—15. And the streams thereof, &c.*] The prophet, whose copiousness of speaking is every where inexhausted, paints, in the most chosen figures, an image of the land and city desolated by war, wasted by fire, and devoted to eternal devastation, by the divine judgment; which should not only be deprived of its inhabitants, and left to impure beasts and birds, accustomed to dwell in deserts and desolate places, but also, by the desolation brought upon it, should be rendered *uninhabitable*, and present the appearance of the infernal flame, like another Sodom and Gomorrah, sending forth continually black smoke and horrid smells. This is the sense of the period, as must be plain to every one. See ch. xiii. 19, &c. where the desolation of Babylon is set forth in similar terms. Though Rome pagan, and the Roman powers, have already suffered great desolation from the Goths and others, yet Vitringa is of opinion, that this prophesy has not yet had its full completion, but will hereafter have it in the destruction of papal Rome. The state of Italy, and the sulphureous soil in the vicinity of Rome, render the probability of this devastation greater.

*Ver. 16, 17. Seek ye out of the book, &c.*] This period contains the confirmation of the preceding sentence; wherein the prophet, to convict the hypocrites, and confirm the pious, assures them of the certain completion of this prophesy. The scene of his discourse is so constructed, as if the prophesy was now fulfilled; when the prophet, supposing that his prophesy would still be extant at the time of the completion, invites all men of doubtful faith to seek into and consider this book or prophesy in all its parts, and to compare it with the completion. This is the sum of the period, which should be rendered, *Search ye from the whole of the book of the Lord, and read; not one of these things shall fail: [no, not so much as the minutest circumstance, even respecting the impure beasts;] one shall not want the other; because the mouth of Jehovah hath commanded and his Spirit shall gather them.*

REFLECTIONS—1st, We have in this chapter,

1. The awful summons sent forth to the nations of the world; yea the earth and all things therein are called upon to hearken, as if the irrational inanimate creatures were more attentive than hardened sinners.

2. The universality of the approaching judgments of God

is declared against all the nations and their armies who have committed fornication with the great whore. See Rev. xviii. 3. and therefore are doomed to utter destruction, Rev. xix. 21.

3. The execution of this terrible doom is displayed in the most awful colours: the carcases of the slain will be unburied, and send forth pestilential vapours; the very mountains are melted with blood, like rivers running down; the hosts of heaven, sun, moon, and stars, dropping as untimely figs, and the firmament wrapped up as a scroll, representing the utter ruin of the states and kingdoms of the followers of the man of sin, with their princes and mighty men (compare Rev. xix. 17, 18. Rev. xiv. 20. Rev. vi. 13—27.). And this is effected by the sword of the Lord, *bathed in heaven*, well-tempered, and descending with fury irresistible on Idumæa, probably the Romish state, the implacable enemy of the church of Christ, as the Edomites were of the Jews, and therefore called *the people of my curse*, lying under it, and doomed to this dire judgment. Before this sword the armies of Antichrist, the common soldiers, as lambs and goats, like hecatombs at the altar, fall sacrifices to divine justice at Bozrah, representing Rome, the capital of the antichristian powers: and their chief captains, fierce as bulls and strong as unicorns, shall perish together, and the land be soaked with their blood and fattened, or *made drunk*, as with showers of rain, such vast quantities should be shed, see Rev. xvi. 6. xvii. 6. xiv. 20. *Note;* (1.) Miserable, eternally miserable, are they who, by their sins provoking God's curse, awaken his sword of judgment, (2.) If it be terrible but to hear the report, sinner, how wilt thou endure when this great day of his wrath shall come? (3.) The sinners in hell are eternal sacrifices to God's justice; and therefore, when the smoke of their torment ascends, his saints adore him. (4.) However long triumphant, and cruelly oppressive, the enemies of God's people may have been, their doom is determined, and God will give them blood to drink.

4. The equity of the procedure is remarked; this day of vengeance is the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion, when the church of God, and every persecuted member of it, will find a righteous judge espousing their quarrel, and recompensing to the full the injuries they have endured. See Rev. xiii. 10. xi. 18. *Note;* When we are suffering for the testimony of the truth and a good conscience, we should be comforted in patient hope that the year of recompence is at hand for Ziou's friends and Zion's enemies.

2dly, Awful and most awakening are the images here used to display the utter ruin and desolations of the enemies of Christ and his people; and which seem to look

## C H A P. XXXV.

*The joyful flourishing of Christ's kingdom. The weak are encouraged by the virtues and privileges of the gospel.*

[Before Christ 713.]

**T**HE wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.

2 It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of

the LORD, and the excellency of our God.

3 ¶ Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.

4 Say to them *that are* of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come *with* vengeance, *even* God, *with* a recompence; he will come and save you.

5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

6 Then shall the lame *man* leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the

forward to the fall of Antichrist, and may also be applied to that great and terrible day of the Lord, when the sinner's torment in body and soul will be completed.

1. Their land is described as the land of Sodom. Since sin hath rendered it as fuel for the flames, the wrath of God shall kindle the inextinguishable burnings; and their cities deserted, desolate, ruinous, shall become the abode of every unclean bird and ravenous beast; the elegance and dignity of which description cannot be equalled, and which every comment must debase. Only we may observe, [1.] The dreadful evil of sin, the cause of all those desolations. [2.] The folly and madness of attempting to fix our abode on earth, doomed so shortly, with all the works on it, to be burnt up. [3.] The terrible end of the ungodly, when wrath to the uttermost shall be poured out upon them, and they shall be cast into the lake of brimstone and fire which burneth for ever and ever.

2. An assurance is given of the most minute fulfilment of the prophesy. And when the destruction cometh, they are commanded to compare the event with the prediction, and not a tittle will be found to fail. Since God's word hath commanded, his Spirit will accomplish it; collecting in exact order, as at the deluge, these monsters with their mates to their appointed abode; and, according to the dictates of justice, dooming the place to everlasting ruin. These, with the correspondent prophecies in the book of Revelations, are yet in the womb of time; but shall as surely be accomplished in their season, as those which we have seen already fulfilled. And when we read in the book of the Lord, the sure expectation thereof should comfort and support the suffering faints of God.

## C H A P. XXXV.

THE prophet in this chapter, containing the 2d section of his 3d discourse, sets forth the jubilee of the church, upon the downfall of its enemies, together with its flourishing state. The section is three-fold; containing, *first*, a proposition concerning the consolation which the church should receive on account of the judgment upon Edom, together with its most flourishing state after that time, and the divine presence with it, ver. 1, 2. *Secondly*, an exhortation directed to the faithful ministers of the church, that they should comfort the infirm, the weak, the afflicted people of God, from the certain hope of this benefit. *Thirdly*, an enarration of the privileges of the state of

the church at this time; such as,—the grace of illumination, ver. 5.—alacrity in spiritual duty, ver. 6.—a diffusion of divine grace among men of every order, and in places heretofore subject to Satan,—middle ver. 6, 7.—the purity and holiness of the church, ver. 8.—the preservation of the people of God, in a state of peace and security, against the temptations of Satan, or public persecutions, ver. 9.—the unity of the church, and its joy and consolation in this flourishing state, ver. 10.

*Ver. 1, 2. The wilderness, &c.]* There can be no doubt of the connection of this chapter with that preceding. Comp. ver. 4. with ver. 8. of that chapter. The most joyful, prosperous, and glorious things are here predicted, concerning the state of the church after the judgment upon Edom, in such figurative terms as are familiar with our prophet, and are easily understood. We have had occasion heretofore to observe, that by the *wilderness* is generally meant the Gentile church; the present prophesy, therefore, is a full and clear prediction of the effects of evangelical grace upon the unfruitful desert of the Gentile world. Vitringa is of opinion, that some future and very glorious state of the church is here foretold. See Bishop Lowth's 20th Prelection, a fine critique on this and the preceding chapter.

*Ver. 3, 4. Strengthen ye the weak hands.]* These words seem rightly to be understood as an address of the prophet to the teachers of the church of that time whereof he speaks, exhorting them, from the promise of the certain deliverance and glorious restoration of the oppressed and afflicted church, to comfort the dejected minds of the pious, and raise their drooping spirits. See Heb. xii. 12.

*Ver. 5, 6. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened.]* After a parenthesis in the two preceding verses, the prophet continues his discourse, and more particularly sets forth those privileges of the church which should constitute its dignity and felicity. These privileges undoubtedly are spiritual; and though they may in some measure be applied to the unexpected vicissitude of the deliverance of the Jews from their enemies, yet were they even literally fulfilled in the times of the Messiah, by the miracles which he performed, by the preaching of the Gospel, and by the effusion of his enlightening Spirit. The *blind*, the *deaf*, the *lame*, the *dumb*, signify persons spiritually so, to whom by God's grace were given, through the Gospel of Christ, eyes to see, and ears to hear, feet to walk, [power to perform] and tongues

wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

7 And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay shall be grafs with reeds and rushes.

8 And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness;

the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.

9 No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there:

10 And the ransomed of the LORD shall

tongues to speak the things which concern their salvation.

Ver. 6, 7. *For in the wilderness, &c.*] The prophet here gives us another specimen of the wonderful change in the nature of things with respect to their spiritual state; not only the weak, those who were devoid of comfort, and thirsting for grace among the people of God—who were like a desert, shall at this time satisfy their thirst, and be largely enriched with the blessings of grace; but also nations, and those the most barbarous, heretofore strangers to all spiritual grace and comfort, possessed and inhabited of Satan and his legions, should at this time be abundantly endowed with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, in order to their spiritual instruction and life; nay, among those very nations, formerly dry, barren, and void of the knowledge of God, learned and wise teachers, exercised in the word of righteousness, should spring up, who should plentifully produce the salutary waters of divine truth, for the instruction and consolation of others. Vitringa renders the last clause, *In the habitation of dragons, in the places where they used to lie, shall reeds and rushes plentifully spring up.* The meaning is, that the dens of dragons, formerly sandy and burning with heat, should be turned into pools, where reeds and rushes should grow luxuriously. The idea is kept up of a sandy thirsty desert changed into a fruitful and well-watered plain; for we should remember that it is the want of water which renders the vast deserts of the eastern world so intolerable and uninhabitable.

Ver. 8. *And an highway, &c.*] According to Vitringa the meaning of this verse is, that the rule of faith and morals, according to which the Israel of God must walk, shall be so clearly and fully shewn at this time from the word of God, that men of the most simple and uncultivated understandings, lovers of the truth, and desirous of the communion of the church, shall not be able to stray from it; and he thinks the meaning of the clause, *וְהוּא לְמַעַן יֵשְׁבוּ לָמוֹ*, *But it shall be for those*, is, “It shall be for those holy persons before mentioned, those ransomed of the Lord, ver. 10. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be the way of the clean or holy:” Bishop Lowth, however, is of opinion that the passage is ill understood, from a wrong punctuation. He would read it thus:

*No unclean person shall pass through it:  
But He himself shall be with them, walking in the way,  
And the foolish shall not err therein.*

He, i. e. our GOD, mentioned ver. 4. “He who dwelt among us, for whom a way was prepared in the desert;

“who came in and went out before us.” The ancient Jews themselves understood these passages of the Messiah. Dr. Chandler observes, that if you take *wilderness* in the prophet literally for the place of the converse of Jesus, or figuratively for the poor and illiterate that he was to converse with, Jesus fully answered the prophet’s description, by doing his wonderful cures both in the desert and upon the diseased of the poor; and manifested himself in a remarkable manner, by the specific nature of his miracles, and by the scene or theatre on which they were performed. See Chandler’s Defence, Bishop Lowth’s 20th Prelection, and Vitringa.

Ver. 9, 10. *No lion shall be there, &c.*] The prophet in these verses continues the figure, expressing, first, that this way for the ransomed should not only be plain, but free from all kinds of danger; the meaning whereof is, that they who at that time professed and possessed the true religion should be safe under the protection of God, from affliction, persecution, and tyranny; which naturally leads our ideas to some future state of the church, for the full completion of this prophecy. Isaiah adds, secondly, that the ransomed of JEHOVAH should walk along this way, and return to Zion. The meaning is, that they should seek for the communion of God in the communion of the true church, which, both with respect to its original, and mystically, is called Zion. See chap. lx. 14. The words in this verse are very strong and expressive, and seem to have a much further reference than to the first conversion of the Gentiles. Indeed we may well say of this prophecy with Bishop Lowth, that it seems to be of the number of those which have not yet obtained their full completion. “*Plane enim videtur hoc vaticinium ex eorum numero esse, que ad ultimam prænuntiatorum eventuum metam nondum pervenerunt in arcibus Dei decretis adhuc reposita.*” For this prophecy evidently appears to be of the number of those, which have not yet arrived at the last goal [the final accomplishment] of the foretold events hitherto repositated in the secret counsels of God.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, This prophecy chiefly regards,

1. The flourishing state of the church, when the Gentile world, before a barren wilderness, by the preaching of the Gospel puts on a new face, blossoming with the joys of divine consolations, bringing forth the most excellent fruits of grace, and with such abundance as to be compared to Lebanon, where the choicest cedars grew; and to Carmel and Sharon, the richest spots of Judæa for corn and pasturage; such strength, beauty, and fruitfulness, should eminently unite in the Gospel church, and they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God, the

Lord

return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall ob-

tain joy and gladness; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Lord Jesus Christ, his person and offices, wherein God is so transcendantly magnified, and appears so amiable and glorious in the eyes of the faithful. *Note*: A believing view of the Redeemer's grace and glory brings joy to the heart, and is the effectual means of quickening it to bring forth much fruit.

2. By the ministry of the word, they are encouraged and supported to bear up under the temptations and sufferings to which, for the sake of Christ, they would be exposed. *Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees*, those who from an awakened sense of guilt and wrath were ready to sink down in despair, unable to lift up the hands of prayer, must be encouraged; and those, whose knees trembled under the load of their trials, from corruption or persecution, the ministers of God must confirm, by pointing them to the great and precious promises. *Say to them that are of a fearful heart, be strong, fear not*; though you are weak, your enemies mighty, and in your own strength you feel yourselves utterly unable to cope with them, yet help is laid for you on one mighty to save; therefore, be strong in the Lord, look to him, and then your fears will vanish, *behold*, see your deliverance near and sure; *your God, your reconciled God and Saviour, will come with vengeance, to cover your enemies with confusion, even God with a recompence, or, the God of recompence, to give a reward to his saints, and tribulation to them that trouble them; he will come and save you*; as sure as ever he once appeared in the flesh, victorious over the powers of darkness, so surely will he, in every time of our distress, appear for our succour; and, when the appointed hour arrives, be revealed the second time from heaven to consummate in the faithful soul the salvation he has begun.

2dly, We have,

1. The wonders which shall be wrought of Christ's coming, on the bodies and souls of men. The blind shall see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, the dumb speak, which we see literally fulfilled, Mat. ix. 27, &c. Mark, vii. 34, 35. Acts, iii. 6—8. Mat. ix. 32, 33, &c.; but greater works than these shall he do, enlightening the blindness of the fallen mind, causing the spiritually deaf to hear and receive the Gospel; strengthening those who were helpless, to walk in the ways of truth and righteousness, and teaching those to sing his praise whose lips before had been sealed up in silence. Lord, continue still to make thy glorious power to appear!

2. The remarkable out-pouring of the Spirit in the days of Christ, and the blessed effects thereby produced. *In the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert*; such a copious effusion of divine gifts, graces, and consolations shall then be made on the Gentile world, that *the parched ground and thirsty land, the sinner's soul, barren or scorched up with the sense of divine wrath, shall become a pool and springs of water*, refreshed and fertilized: *in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, the places where Satan, the great dragon, has fixed his abode, and men resembling him in fierceness and cruelty, such as the Pagan emperors, or*

Papal powers, shall be grass with reeds and rushes, a number of converts to the Gospel, thick as grass, and flourishing as the reeds in the brook: and this was fulfilled when the Pagan temples were changed into places for Christian worship; and shall be farther accomplished when Babylon mystical is fallen, and the saints of God triumphant over her.

3. The way which then will be opened for all nations, Jew and Gentile, to draw nigh unto God; and that way is Christ, emphatically so called, because no man cometh to the Father but by him; nor can there be any access to an offended God, but through his blood and intercession. He is a *high way* ordained by the King of heaven, free and open to all, and where every obstruction from sin and Satan is removed; a *way of holiness*, or *holy way*, where the grace of sanctification, as well as the gift of justification, is bestowed, and strength communicated to the soul, enabling those who are in Christ to walk and please God; where all holy means and ordinances are found; where all the travellers are in temper and conduct in a gracious measure holy, and which will infallibly conduct the faithful to the perfection of holiness; *the unclean shall not pass over it*, those being justly excluded who persist in the love and service of their sins; *but it shall be for those justified and renewed souls above described; or he shall be with them*, Christ their companion, guide, and support: *the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein*; counted such of the world, after their conversion to God, and spiritually indeed such before they were taught of him, these travellers to Zion shall not err, the way is plain before them, the Bible is their sure directory, and the Spirit of truth their guide; not that the faithful believer is infallible, but he shall not err in essential points. *No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there*; no fierce or turbulent dispositions; none to disturb the peace of the happy traveller; and especially the *old lion, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour, shall not be able to approach to destroy any soul that is found in this holy way; but the redeemed shall walk there*; these faithful ones shall in safety travel without being weary, and reach at last their blessed journey's end, which will be,

4. Their everlasting joy. For *the ransomed of the Lord, those who have been faithful unto death, shall return from the state of sin and darkness, in which, like others, they lay, to the shepherd and bishop of their souls, Christ Jesus, and, under his guidance, come to Zion, that mount of God in glory, appointed for their eternal residence; and, while with grateful songs they celebrate redeeming love, and ascribe to Divine grace their whole salvation, everlasting joy shall be upon their heads*; joy which shall never again be interrupted by sin, temptation, or suffering, but be permanent as God himself, the source thereof. *They shall obtain joy and gladness, unspeakable and full of glory, as much exceeding all that they tasted here below, as the boundless ocean exceeds the drop of the bucket; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away, when every cause which could produce them is for ever removed,*

and

C H A P. XXXVI.

*Sennacherib invadeth Judah. Rabshakeh, sent by Sennacherib, by blasphemous persuasions soliciteth the people to revolt: his words are told to Hezekiah.*

[Before Christ 714.]

**N**OW it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the defended cities of Judah, and took them.

2 ¶ And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem unto king Hezekiah with a great army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fullers' field.

3 Then came forth unto him Eliakim, Hilkiah's son, which was over the house, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, Asaph's son, the recorder.

4 And Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?

5 I say, sayest thou, (but they are but vain words) I have counsel and strength for war: now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?

6 Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him.

7 But if thou say to me, We trust in the LORD our God: is it not he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar?

8 Now therefore give pledges, I pray thee, to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them.

9 How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?

10 And am I now come up without the LORD against this land to destroy it? the LORD said unto me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.

11 Then said Eliakim and Shebna and Joah unto Rabshakeh, Speak, I pray thee, unto thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and speak not to us in the Jews' language, in the ears of the people that are on the wall.

and the most perfect holiness and most perfect happiness flow from the uninterrupted beatific vision of the triune God. O may my soul possess this everlasting joy!

C H A P. XXXVI.

IN this and the three following chapters is contained the HISTORICAL part of the book of Isaiah, relating a memorable transaction, strongly confirmative of the divine mission of our prophet. So in Jeremiah, a history of an event is added to the prophecies which he had frequently delivered concerning it. See chap. lii. Some have thought that Isaiah wrote the prophecies in the former part of this book before the irruption of the Assyrian into Judæa, and the latter ones, from chap. xl. after it.

Ver. 1. *Now it came to pass*] This famous expedition happened in the year of the world 4001, seven hundred and thirteen years before Christ. Concerning Sennacherib, see Univ. Hist. vol. ii. p. 79. vol. iv. 162, &c. *All the defended cities*, must mean all those which were in the way; for it is plain that he had not taken all. See chap. xxxvii. 8. and the Note.

Ver. 2. *And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh*] The prophet omits what is related in 2 Kings, xviii. 14—16, that Hezekiah sent ambassadors to Sennacherib at Lachish. What is here related probably happened after Sennacherib

returned from his Egyptian expedition. See Joseph. Antiq. book x. chap. i. *Rabshakeh* is thought to have been a name of office, signifying the principal cup-bearer, as *Tartan* and *Rabfaris* mentioned in 2 Kings, xviii. 17. signify the president of the council and the chief eunuch.

Ver. 5. *I say, &c.*] *Thou hast said, (but they are vain words,) I have counsel and strength sufficient for the war.* Lowth.

Ver. 6. *Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed*] This comparison is excellently adapted to denote an ally, who is not only weak and unable to help, but also dangerous to those who rely upon him for succour; and his representing the power of Egypt to be as brittle as the reeds growing upon the banks of the Nile, (for to these doubtless the Syrian orator alludes) is a great beauty in the similitude. See Ezek. xxix. 6.

Ver. 7. *But if thou say, &c.*] It appears from this passage, what deep root idolatry had taken in the time of Ahaz, when Hezekiah, the great reformer of religion, seemed to have instituted a new one in the eyes of foreigners and strangers. *Before this altar*, means before the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem. See 2 Kings, xviii. 22.

Ver. 10. *And am I now come up without the Lord*] It is plain from the seventh verse, that Rabshakeh, by *the Lord*, meant that god whom himself or his master the king of Assyria

12 But Rabshakeh said, Hath my master sent me to thy master and to thee to speak these words? *hath he not sent me to the men that sit upon the wall, that they may eat their own dung and drink their own piss with you?*

13 ¶ Then Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and said, Hear ye the words of the great king, the king of Assyria.

14 Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you.

15 Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us: this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

16 Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me: and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig-tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern;

17 Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards.

18 *Beware*, lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The LORD will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?

19 Where *are* the gods of Hamath and Arphad? where *are* the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand?

20 Who *are they* among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?

21 But they held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not.

22 Then came Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, that *was* over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, the son of Asaph, the recorder, to Hezekiah with *their* clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.

Assyria adored, and not the Jehovah of the Jews; he boasts therefore that he did not come without the permission of this god: His prophets and diviners, most likely, had informed him that his expedition should be successful; for the heathens, we know, were used to consult their priests and augurs on these occasions. He urges therefore, that it was in vain for the Jews to trust in the Lord, when that Lord himself had sent him against them. There are some, however, who think that he had heard and known of Isaiah's prophecies, (see chap. viii. 7. x. 5, 6.) and that he alludes to them in these words.

Ver. 12. *But Rabshakeh said, &c.*] This verse would be clearer, if read thus, *Hath thy master sent me to my master and to thee [only] to speak these words? Hath he not sent me also to the men who sit upon the wall, &c.* The meaning is, that they may be reduced to such extremity by a close and long siege, as to be obliged to surrender the city. Nothing can be more strongly marked than the insolence of Rabshakeh throughout this whole conference. Observe particularly the next verse.

Ver. 16. *Make an agreement with me.*] *Make peace with me.* Vitringa. The full meaning of the next phrase, *come out to me*, is, *rejoice in your liberty*. He invites the people, now shut up through fear within the walls of Jerusalem, to make a treaty of peace with him, and thus to enjoy their liberty without fear or danger.

Ver. 17. *A land of corn and wine, &c.*] It is added in 2 Kings, xviii. 32. *a land of oil-olive and of honey*. It is still usual among the Arabs to dip their bread in oil of olives. Maillet tells us, that the poor people of Egypt use, out of

necessity, a sort of oil drawn from a plant called *cirica*, and that the Jews, through sparingness, make use of it in the preparation of many of their meats; which must make, he observes, a detestable cookery. Rabshakeh seems to refer to these kinds of oil. See *Observations*, p. 138.

Ver. 18—20. *Beware, lest Hezekiah persuade*] *Let not Hezekiah seduce you with words of this kind.* Vitringa. Agreeably to the opinion of all the Pagan nations, Rabshakeh considers and speaks of Jehovah as the tutelary deity of the Jews: Now, as their tutelary deities had not delivered the cities and nations here mentioned, the Assyrian with a blasphemous insolence infers, that the God of Israel could not deliver Jerusalem out of his hands. See chap. x. 9, &c. and Hezekiah's fine answer to this reproach in the 18th and 19th verses of the next chapter.

Ver. 22. *With their clothes rent*] In token of their grief and astonishment, both for the blasphemy of Rabshakeh, and on account of their dread of the approaching calamity. It was usual not only in cases of grief, but also of blasphemy, to rend the clothes: a custom doubtless of great antiquity, and very suitable to the reverence due to the divine Majesty. See Matt. xxvi. 65. and Vitringa.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, As this transaction has been treated of at large, 2 Kings, xviii. xix. and 2 Chron. xxxii. a few remarks will here suffice; and we may observe, [1.] How apt success is to intoxicate, and prosperity to puff men up with pride. Because the other defended cities were taken, Rabshakeh already regards Jerusalem as a prey. [2.] When, like Hezekiah, we are found in the

CHAP. XXXVII.

*Hezekiah, mourning, sendeth to Isaiah to pray for them. Isaiah comforteth them. Sennacherib, going to encounter Tirhakah, sendeth a blasphemous letter to Hezekiah. Hezekiah's prayer. Isaiah's prophecy of the pride and destruction of Sennacherib, and the good of Zion. An angel slayeth the Assyrians. Sennacherib is slain at Nineveh by his own sons.*

[Before Christ 710.]

**A**ND it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard *it*, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD.

2 And he sent Eliakim, who *was* over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah the prophet they son of Amoz.

3 And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day *is* a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy: for the children are

come to the birth, and *there is* not strength to bring forth.

4 It may be the LORD thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the LORD thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up *thy* prayer for the remnant that is left.

5 So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah.

6 ¶ And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say unto your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.

7 Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

zealous discharge of our duty, and perhaps hoping for singular blessings from God, we may meet with the severest conflicts and discouragements, for the exercise of our faith, the brightening of our graces, and the increase of our glory. [3.] The people of God may expect sometimes the threats, sometimes the mockery of men, to intimidate and discourage them from following the good ways of the Lord; but let their hearts stand fast, and trust still on him. [4.] Many, like Rabshakeh, pretend to have the Lord's commission, who will be found to have a lie in their right hand.

2dly, With civil entreaty the persons appointed by Hezekiah for the conference with Rabshakeh, beg the favour of him to speak to them in the Syriac tongue, as his discourse had an evident bad tendency to discourage those who were within hearing: to which he makes a reply as indecent as insolent; and, addressing his speech, in the Jews' language, to the people on the wall, with blasphemous reflections on Israel's God, endeavours to spread a spirit of mutiny among them. But they are forbidden to reply; and, shocked at the blasphemy, or grieved at their distress, the messengers return unto the king, and report the words of this impious Assyrian. *Note*; (1.) Insolent language betrays a base spirit. (2.) The devil, like Rabshakeh, would insinuate, that it is our advantage to serve him; but his fair promises are foul lies. (3.) Silence is often the most proper answer to railing accusations. (4.) It were folly to attempt replying to those who are as unreasonable as they are wicked. (5.) It is a grief to the gracious soul, to hear the name of God dishonoured.

CHAP. XXXVII.

*Ver. 2. And he sent—unto Isaiah the prophet*] It appears through the whole sacred history to have been the custom to consult prophets of remarkable authority in doubtful cases. The present example is parallel to that mentioned 2 Kings, xxii. 13, 14.

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*Ver. 3. For the children are come to the birth*] This was a proverbial expression, used to convey ideas of the greatest calamity and almost inevitable danger. Procopius thus explains the words: "We are in pain to hear such blasphemous expressions, but are unable to punish those who have made use of them." Vitringa says the meaning is, "Matters are now in the utmost distress; so that, unless some extraordinary remedy or help be brought, there is an end of the public and domestic safety." The idea is taken from a woman in child-birth, so greatly weakened by her pains, that without some extraordinary assistance there can be no hope of her delivery. See Hof. xiii. 13.

*Ver. 4. Sent to reproach the living God, &c.*] This strongly marks the distinction between the Almighty, considered as the tutelary God of his chosen people, and the tutelary deities of the Pagan nations: The latter were only lifeless idols; the former was endued with unceasing life, and the source of life to all creatures. Vitringa renders the next clause, *And to affront with words*: It is remarkable, that Hezekiah, in great modesty and humility, as if he was unworthy of his favour and regard, calls Jehovah, not *his* God, but *thy* God, the God of that Isaiah who was devoted to him, and peculiarly happy in his communion and favour. The last clause properly should be rendered, *For the remnant which are found*, "which actually exist at this time in their country." See 2 Chron. xxxv. 18. in the original.

*Ver. 7. Behold, I will send a blast upon him*] *Behold, I will put a spirit [of fear] into him, when he shall hear, &c.* Vitringa. See chap. xxxi. 8, 9. whence it clearly follows, that the interpretation here given is right, and that the prophet here refers to the fears of Sennacherib upon the report of Tirhakah's invasion, and not a pestilential blast, as our version would lead one to think.

*Ver. 8. Found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah*] Libnah was not far from Lachish, both being situated on

4 M

the

8 ¶ So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish.

9 And he heard say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, He is come forth to make war with thee. And when he heard *it*, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying,

10 Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.

11 Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by destroying them utterly; and shalt thou be delivered?

12 Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed, *as* Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which *were* in Telassar?

13 Where *is* the king of Hamath, and the king of Arphad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah?

14 ¶ And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.

15 And Hezekiah prayed unto the LORD, saying,

16 O LORD of Hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest *between* the cherubims, thou *art* the God, *even* thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth.

17 Incline thine ear, O LORD, and hear; open thine eyes, O LORD, and see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God.

18 Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries.

19 And have cast their gods into the fire: for they *were* no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them.

20 Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou *art* the LORD, *even* thou only.

21 ¶ Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria:

22 This *is* the word which the LORD hath

the mountains of Judah. It is probable, that Sennacherib, finding himself unable to take the latter, had removed to Libnah, which he considered as a place not so well fortified; and so situated, that, by keeping a strong guard in the passes of the mountains, he should be able to carry on the siege, notwithstanding the approach of *Tirhakah*; who, most probably, was the same with the *Sabaco* of Herodotus. See Univ. Hist. vol. iv. p. 321. It is very difficult to determine the places mentioned in the subsequent verses. It is most likely that the king of Assyria thought by this message to have terrified Hezekiah and the people into compliance, which was now the more necessary for him, as the invasion of *Tirhakah* rendered it less proper for him to attempt so long and difficult a siege as that of Jerusalem was likely to prove.

Ver. 15. *And Hezekiah prayed*] The Pagans taught the knowledge of God, and the nature of their hero gods, only in their mysteries. The Hebrews were the only people whose object in their public and national worship, was the God of the universe. Josephus tells Apion, that the high and sublime knowledge which the Gentiles attained with difficulty in the rare and temporal celebration of their mysteries, was usually taught to the Jews at all times. "Can any government," says he, "be more holy than this, or any religion better adapted to the nature of the Deity?"

"Where, in any place but this, are the whole people, by the special diligence of the priests, to whom the care of public instruction is committed, accurately taught the principles of true piety?—For those things which the Gentiles keep up for a few days only, that is, during those solemnities which they call *mysteries* and *initiations*, we, with vast delight, and a plenitude of knowledge which admits of no error, fully enjoy and perpetually contemplate through the whole course of our lives. If you ask the nature of those things which in our sacred rites are enjoined and forbidden, I answer, they are simple, and easily understood. The first instruction relates to the Deity; and teaches, that God *contains all things*, and is a being every way perfect, and the sole cause of all existence; the beginning, the middle, and the end of all things." This verse would be rather clearer, if we were to read, *Thou, even thou alone, art the God of all the kingdoms, &c.* Hezekiah here asserts the sole and universal dominion of the Lord God of Israel. See ver. 20. Psalm xvi. 5. Jer. x. 11. Divine Legation, book ii. and Vitringa.

Ver. 18. *Have laid waste all the nations, &c.*] This is literally in the Hebrew, *All the lands and their land*; but our translation undoubtedly gives the proper sense. See 2 Kings, xix. 17.

Ver. 22. *The virgin, the daughter of Zion, &c.*] Well-formed



spoken concerning him: The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.

23 Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel.

24 By thy servants hast thou reproached the Lord, and hast said, By the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon; and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, and the choice fir-trees thereof; and I will enter into the height of his border, and the forest of his Carmel.

25 I have digged, and drunk water; and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the

rivers of the besieged places.

26 Hast thou not heard long ago how I have done it; and of ancient times, that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldst be to lay waste defenced cities into ruinous heaps.

27 Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded: they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the house-tops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up.

28 But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me.

29 Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the

formed cities and states, flourishing, free, and obedient to honest and legal rule, are every where in Scripture compared to virgins. By the daughter of Zion, and of Jerusalem, are meant the people, inhabitants of Zion and Jerusalem. The image is extremely fine, whereby the contempt of Sennacherib's threats is expressed.

Ver. 24, 25. By the multitude of my chariots] Cities, in the prophetic writings, are metaphorically represented by woods or forests, especially those of Lebanon and Carmel; and the several ranks of inhabitants by the taller and lesser trees growing there. Hence we may collect the true sense of this passage, which represents the Assyrian prince as threatening to take mount Zion, together with the capital city of Jerusalem, and to destroy their principal inhabitants. The height of his border, and the grove of his fruitful field, are generally thought figuratively to refer to the temple and the city. The Chaldee paraphrast renders it, And I will also take the house of their sanctuary, and I will subject to myself their fortified city. The Assyrian adds, I have digged and drunk waters, or, as it is in 2 Kings, strange waters; that is, according to Vitringa, "I have hitherto possessed all my desires; whatever I have vehemently thirsted after, I have attained." Others understand this and the following clause more literally, thus: "I have marched through deserts, where it was expected my army would perish with thirst, and yet even there I have digged and found water; and I have rendered rivers fordable by turning their streams from their ancient beds, and deprived the besieged of the benefit of those waters." Vitringa, however, renders the last clause, And with the sole of my feet will I dry up all the rivers of Egypt. The prophet here alludes to a custom of the Egyptians, who commonly made use of machines, which were worked by the foot, to draw water from rivers, for whatever purpose it might be wanted; and the meaning, according to Vitringa, is, that the Assyrian, by the assistance of his very numerous army,—the sole of his feet, would dry

up all the rivers of Egypt, so that they should not delay the success of his expedition. The expression is of the hyperbolic or Thraonic kind, and well suits this haughty monarch, whose mind was at this time full of his expeditions into Judæa and Egypt. See 2 Chron. xxxii. 4. and Deut. xi. 10. The author of the Observations remarks, that he thinks this whole verse a reference to the Eastern way of watering; as much as to say, "I have digged channels, and drank, and caused my army to drink out of new-made rivers, into which I have conducted the waters which used to flow elsewhere; and I have laid those old channels dry with the sole of my foot, with as much ease as a gardener digs channels in his garden, and directing the waters of a cistern into a new well, with his foot stops up that in which they before ran." In confirmation whereof, let it be remembered, that this way of watering by rills is in use in those countries whence Sennacherib came, continued down from ancient times there, without doubt, as it is in Egypt. The understanding of those words of the Psalmist, Ps. lxxv. 9. Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it; thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, as expressive of the watering it as by a rill of water, makes an easy and beautiful sense; the rain being to the earth in general the same thing, from God, that a watering rill, or little river, is to a garden from man. See Observations, p. 343.

Ver. 26. Hast thou not heard long ago] The address of God to the Assyrian is here continued from ver. 23. wherein he answers the boastings of this proud prince, and convinces him that all his counsel and power were nothing, since these events wholly depended on a superior cause; namely, his sovereign will and over-ruling providence, whereof he had made the Assyrian the instrument in his Almighty hand.

Ver. 29. Therefore will I put my hook, &c.] The meaning of the passage is plain, that God would so dispose matters by his providence as to compel the Assyrian to return back with his army, circumscribing and leading him like a

way by which thou camest.

30 And this shall be a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat *this* year such as groweth of itself: and the second year that which springeth of the same: and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof.

31 And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.

32 For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of Hosts shall do this.

33 Therefore thus saith the LORD con-

cerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it.

34 By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD.

35 For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

36 ¶ Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses.

horse, or a wild beast, wherever and as he pleased. The metaphor, in the latter part, is plainly taken from a horse, an ass, or mule; but it is doubtful, whether the former metaphor alludes to the method by which they managed their beasts in the East, particularly the dromedaries, which are led by a cord fastened to a ring, run through the nostrils of the beast; or, to the absolute power that a man has over a fish which is fattened by the nose to his hook. See Ezek. xix. 4, and xxix. 3.

Ver. 30. *And this shall be a sign unto thee*] The discourse is here directed to Hezekiah, whose faith in the event just predicted God is pleased to confirm by an additional sign; which sign, as it was not to happen till the event above predicted was fulfilled, was to be considered as a token, not only of God's interposition in that event, but also of his peculiar favour and protection after Sennacherib was departed. In other passages of Scripture we have signs given in the same manner, particularly Exod. iii. 12. See also ch. vii. 14. of our prophet. At the time that Isaiah spoke this, nothing seemed more improbable than that the Jews, delivered from the Assyrians, should freely use and enjoy their land, and be supported from its spontaneous productions, as well in this as in the subsequent sabbatical year. Pilkington observes, that the word חֲסִידִים *saphiich* rendered *such things as grow of themselves*, properly signifies, "the natural produce of the ground the first year it was cultivated;" and the word שְׂבִיחִים *sbachiis*, rendered, *that which springeth of the same*, denotes, "the natural produce of the ground the second year;" which likewise was produced by the seed scattered in the preceding harvest.

Ver. 31, 32. *And the remnant that is escaped*] The prophet passes from fields to men, and from the cultivation of land to the nation and the church; for, having just said, that, being delivered from the Assyrians, they should cultivate their land as usual, he adds, that it should also come to pass that the nation and the church, delivered from this calamity, should flourish again, increase, and bring forth much fruit; which we know happened under Hezekiah. See 2 Chron. xxxii. 22. However, this passage and the next verse are by no means to be restrained to this period only. Comp. ch. x. 20, 21.

Ver. 33. *Therefore thus saith the Lord*] There is a gradation in these words, as is usual with Isaiah. The first declaration is, that Sennacherib, if he shall attempt to besiege the city, shall never be able to succeed: *He shall not come into this city.* The second is, that he shall not bring his army so near to the city as to come before it with shields, or raise a bank against it. To come before it with a shield, is, to defend himself with a shield when besieging a city, or making any attacks upon the walls. The third, that he shall not even shoot an arrow into the city, which might be done from far. The word סֶלֶל *solelab* rendered a *bank*, says Pilkington, seems rather to signify an engine of war made use of in flinging stones or any heavy body into or against a besieged city. The Hebrew word שָׂפַק *sbapak* with which it is connected, properly signifies to *pour out*, and therefore may be applied either to the pouring out of vessels earth or rubbish to raise a mount, or to the pouring out of stones from an engine. According to this observation, it might be rendered, *nor play an engine there.* In one of the Greek versions in the Hexapla it is rendered *βολισσας* *ballissas*, or battering engines. See Ezek. xxvi. 8. in the original. Possibly it might be rendered, with equal propriety, *nor raise a battery against it.* See Parkhurst on the word סֶלֶל. This verse is to be understood properly and directly of Sennacherib and his army.

Ver. 35. *For my servant David's sake*] All the promises made to David were made to him in Christ; he and his kingdom were types of the kingdom of Christ. It is to this, and not to the personal merits of David, that the sacred writer here alludes.

Ver. 36. *Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote*] Sennacherib, flushed with his victories, and breathing destruction against the kingdom of Judah, which had withdrawn its allegiance from him, in his opprobrious message to Hezekiah and his subjects, not only inveighed against them, but blasphemously reviled even their God, bringing down the great God of Israel to the contemptible level of the gods of the nations; putting him to open defiance, and charging him with impotence to his face. This then was the time for the Lord to vindicate his honour, to assert his supremacy and power, and to make both parties sensible, that

37 ¶ So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.

38 And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nifroch his god, that Ad-

rammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Armenia: and Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead.

that he was "glorious in might, equally able to help and to cast down, to save and to destroy." Accordingly, this blasphemous tyrant had scarcely advanced to the holy city, before his forces were instantly broken, as appears from the verse before us. This tremendous act forced him to retreat with shame and confusion, and made it visible to all the nations, especially to the Jews, that JEHOVAH was a God "mighty in strength, and excellent in power:" that he was truly, what he styled himself, "The Lord of Hosts;" and that there was no other God that could deliver after this sort. Josephus asserts, that this destruction was occasioned by a peccilential disease: Antiq. lib. x. c. 2. But his authority, says Vitranga, in matters of this kind, is of no great weight. It is my opinion, continues he, that in a dreadful tempest, raised by this destroying angel, these men were killed by lightning; their bodies being burnt within, while their outward garments were untouched. See ch. x. 16. xxix. 6. xxx. 30. and Pf. lxxvi. 8. which, probably, was composed upon this occasion. We have in prophane history accounts of remarkable destructions by lightning. See Diodor. lib. 11. Justin, lib. xxiv. c. 8. and Pautan. Enaticis, lib. i. p. 5.

Ver. 38. *The house of Nifroch his god*] This was probably the tutelary deity of that country, who might originally have been their king or legislator, and might have been deified, as the custom was, to preserve the veneration of his laws, or the memory of his services to the state. The LXX has it *Νασαρχχ τον πατραρχχον αυτη*. The significations ascribed to the word *Nifroch* are various. Some imagine that it signifies a *ship*; and in the Egyptian tropical hieroglyphics we find that a *ship and pilot* were used to express the governor of the universe. According to others it signifies a *young eagle*; by which might be insinuated the intrepidity, strength, and insatiable ambition of the hero or *patriarchal god* represented by this hieroglyphic. Vitranga conjectures, that he was the same with the Assyrian *Bel*, worshipped under the character of *Mars*; and that the word signifies a *lofty and glorious king*; though I confess, says he, this is doubtful enough, but a matter whereof we may be ignorant without any great loss. The Hebrew of Tobit, published by Munster, calls him *Dagon*.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Shocked at the tidings that he received, Hezekiah in sackcloth falls down before God in his sanctuary; and, sending his chief officers to Isaiah, represents his deplorable situation; as a woman in travail exhausted with her pains, and sinking under her weakness, so ready he seemed to perish, unless the Lord should interpose to vindicate his own honour, for which he begs the prophet's prayers. Nor was his request in vain: Isaiah soon dispatches the messengers with an answer of peace to the king, and bids him, fearless of danger, be confident of seeing the speedy destruction of his enemies. *Note*; (1.) A day of trouble should be a day of humiliation and prayer;

and whatever drives us thus nearer to God, must in the issue prove a blessing. (2.) The prayers of good men are to be earnestly sought; and it is a great encouragement to have them interceding with God in our behalf. (3.) When we are ready to despair, God will often most eminently magnify his power and grace in our deliverance. (4.) They who seek to terrify God's people from their holy profession, will soon be made a terror to themselves.

2dly, Unable to prevail by threatenings and insult, Rabshakeh reports to his master the issue of the conference; and the king of Assyria, in hopes yet to force Hezekiah to submit, before the news should reach him of Tirhakah's armament in his favour, writes a boasting and blasphemous letter to the king of Judah, in order to terrify him into a surrender, which Hezekiah solemnly spreads before the Lord in prayer, resting the case with him to give an answer to this impious blasphemer. *Note*; (1.) Though craft and power unite against the faithful, impotent will be the attempts of their enemies. (2.) Blasphemous discourse is terrible; but to propagate by writing sentiments of irreligion and infidelity, is perpetuating the dire contagion to the latest times, and will more exceedingly aggravate men's guilt. (3.) When we have God for our friend, and have access to pour out with confidence all our complaints into his compassionate bosom, we may rest in peace, and expect him to appear for us.

3dly, In answer to Hezekiah's prayer, Isaiah transmits to him a message from God, who espouses his people's quarrel as his own. He looks with contempt on the impotent threats of Sennacherib. Elated with his past successes, Sennacherib thought he could carry the whole world before him; and, utterly insensible that it was from God alone that he had hitherto prevailed, he ascribes it impudently to his own arm. But God, who sees his proud designs, will blast them suddenly to his confusion, and stop his mad career, as easily as the rider governs his steed. As a sign of the continuance of the divine favour, plenty should be restored as well as peace, notwithstanding the harvest was ruined by the Assyrians, and the succeeding year, as sabbatical, admitted no tillage. The people thus escaped, though but a remnant, should yet take root, and greatly increase; and so far should the enemy be from destroying Jerusalem, that he should not so much as shoot an arrow against it; for before the siege should be regularly formed, God would arise to defend them. His judgment was accordingly executed by an angel, to the intire destruction of the army; and though the king escaped to Nineveh, he there met a more grievous death from his own unnatural sons. *Note*; (1.) The insults cast on his people God renews as affronts against himself, and will assuredly remember them. (2.) Whatever wisdom or prudence we may possess, it is atheism to ascribe to ourselves the glory of our enterprizes. (3.) The wicked can go no farther than the Lord permits, and he can quickly hurl them

## CHAP. XXXVIII.

*Hezekiah, having received a message of death, by prayer hath his life lengthened. The sun goeth ten degrees backward for a sign of that promise: his song of thanksgiving.*

[Before Christ 714.]

**I**N those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.

2 Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the LORD,

3 And said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done *that which is good* in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.

4 ¶ Then came the word of the LORD to Isaiah, saying,

5 Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father: I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.

6 And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city.

7 And this *shall be* a sign unto thee from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he hath spoken;

8 Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun-dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.

them headlong into ruin in the midst of their career of prosperity. (4.) When one distress is removed, another may be in prospect; as here sam inethreatened, though the siege was raised; but he who saves us from all our spiritual foes, can also relieve all our temporal wants; and they who are enabled to trust him in the way of duty shall not be destitute. (5.) If one angel in a night could spread such fearful havock, how safe are they who have the God of angels for their protector, and these his hosts their ministering spirits.

## CHAP. XXXVIII.

*Ver. 1. In these days, &c.]* Though the sacred historian has placed this sickness immediately after the defeat and death of Sennacherib, yet it is evident from ver. 6. that it happened before that time. Hezekiah reigned in all twenty and nine years; he had reigned fourteen years when Sennacherib invaded him, and after his sickness he reigned fifteen years. Consequently this sickness happened in the very same year that the king of Assyria invaded Judæa; but the sacred historian thought proper to defer the account of it, till he had finished the history of Sennacherib. Schultens reads *ill*, instead of *sick unto death*. Compare ver. 21.

*Ver. 2. Then Hezekiah turned his face]* See note on 2 Kings, i. 4. for an account of the Eastern beds; from the position whereof, as there described, it will appear that Hezekiah made use of this posture, that his attendants might not take notice of the fervency of his devotion; for he turned his face from them, and not towards the *wall of the temple*, as some have too fancifully imagined.

*Ver. 3. And Hezekiah wept sore]* Under the law, long life and uninterrupted health are promised as rewards of obedience, and immature death is denounced as a punishment. See Exod. xx. 12. Deut. v. 16. xxx. 16. When we reflect on this, we need not be surpris'd at the sorrow which this good king expressed at his approaching dissolu-

tion. He looked upon it as a punishment, and consequently as a mark of the divine displeasure. Other reasons too might strongly operate upon a good mind, which yet was not perfect in the love of God: the suddenness of this terrible unexpected denunciation; the unsettled state both of his public and domestic affairs; and the natural dread of death inherent in the human mind, and which was not so commonly subdued by gracious souls under the law as under the Gospel, and which might in this case possibly be augmented from a sense of his own defects, and from a thorough persuasion that God was displeas'd at him, by cutting him off in such a manner in the very flower of his age, and when his kingdom and family so particularly required his best assistance. However, be the reasons what they might, it behoves us certainly to judge with great candour of a prince, whose character is so good as that of Hezekiah: and perhaps, blest as we are with a brighter view of a future state than Hezekiah enjoyed, there are but few comparatively who can look upon death, *respectable* as it is even to the best, without some degree of serious concern.

*Ver. 8. Behold, I will bring again, &c.]* The dial in use among the Jews was a kind of stairs; the time of the day was distinguished not by *lines*, but by *steps*, here called *degrees*; and the shade of the sun moved forward a new degree every half hour. The Jewish doctors and the ancient Christian fathers were of opinion, that the sun itself actually went backward. They endeavour to support this opinion by shewing that Merodach-baladan was incited by the view of this miracle to send his messengers to Hezekiah; see 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. and as a further confirmation they add, that it is really taken notice of by Herodotus in his Euterpe, chap. 142. where he expressly asserts, that the Egyptians had observed strange alterations in the motion of the sun, it having arisen four times out of its usual course. Though this observation should be allowed to be true, yet we are under no necessity hence to admit that the sun

9 ¶ The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness :

10 I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave : I am deprived of the residue of my years.

11 I said, I shall not see the LORD, *even* the LORD, in the land of the living : I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world.

12 Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent : I have cut off like a weaver my life : he will cut me off with pining sickness : from day *even* to night wilt thou make an end of me.

13 I reckoned till morning, *that*, as a lion, so will he break all my bones : from day *even* to night wilt thou make an end of me.

14 Like a crane *or* a swallow, so did I chatter : I did mourn as a dove : mine eyes

sun itself or the earth was retrograde, that is to say, that either of them went backwards; all that the Scripture requires of us is, to admit the fact of the shadow's going backward, and this may be accounted for without supposing any uncommon motion either in the sun or in the earth. Nothing more is required to effect this phenomenon than a reflection of the sun's rays, and this might have been caused by an alteration in the density of the atmosphere. To this it may be added, that the original mentions nothing of the sun, but only of its beams or shadow; and how its beams might be inflected by a change made in the atmosphere, may easily be conceived by any person conversant in natural philosophy. This endeavour to account for the phenomenon by no means lessens the miracle; for we assign the alteration of the atmosphere to the immediate and extraordinary operation of God; and every extraordinary interposition of Providence is essentially and properly a miracle. Let it further be observed, we by no means offer this solution in exclusion of others; and if any one thinks that the miracle can be better accounted for in any other way, we shall very readily subscribe to that opinion. *Liberum de eo judicium lectori committo*, says Vitringa. See Scheuchzer's Dissertation on the subject in his *Physique Sacrée*, upon 2 Kings, xx.

*Ver. 9. The writing of Hezekiah*] We have here an example of the piety of king Hezekiah, like a true son of David, singing to his *harp* (for it appears from ver. 20. that this was a song fitted to that instrument) and pouring forth his sacred meditations as was usual among the pious of this nation. Grotius is of opinion, that this song was dictated by Isaiah; Vitringa, however, thinks that there is something in it more involved and less sublime than in the writings of Isaiah.

*Ver. 10. I said, in the cutting off of my days*] *I said, while my days are cut off I shall depart; yea, even to the gates of the grave;—of sheol.* Vitringa. Respecting the place of departed souls, and the several expressions concerning a future state found in this song, similar to those in the book of Job and of Psalms, having already spoken sufficiently, I shall only beg leave to refer my reader to the annotations on those books.

*Ver. 11. I shall not see the Lord, &c.*] It is plain, that Hezekiah in this verse speaks singly and simply of the advantages which he should certainly lose by being suddenly cut off from life; without any respect to a future state. By *not seeing the Lord in the land of the living*, he seems to mean, that he should not see and enjoy the effects of his grace and goodness in the deliverance of his people. The

meaning of the last clause, according to Vitringa, is, *I shall behold man no more, being joined to the inhabitants of the world of rest.*

*Ver. 12. Mine age is departed*] *My habitation is taken away, and is removed from me, like a shepherd's tent: my life is cut off, as by the weaver; he will sever me from the loom; in the course of the day thou wilt finish my web.* Lowth. Vitringa understands the word *דור* *dor*, rendered *age*, to signify the *body*; that habitation, or *dwelling*, in which the soul rather lodges as a guest in a moveable tent, than lives as in a fixed house; he means therefore to say in this passage, that the tabernacle of his body was removed, and as it were carried away by force, like a shepherd's tent, which, on occasion of any violence, is suddenly taken down and transferred elsewhere. The writer probably had in view the tents of the Arabs. See 2 Cor. v. 4. 2 Pet. i. 13. The metaphor in the next clause is taken from weaving. The king, dejected in mind, bears a tender sense of his sins and infirmities, whereby he had offended God, and had given him occasion to *cut off* the not yet finished *thread* of his life. Nay, he goes on, increasing the expression, that the weaver had not only cut the web which he had begun to weave, but that he had even cut it from the very *first threads*, (for so the original may be rendered,) and had wholly destroyed the woof. For, when Hezekiah, flourishing in life and power, proposed to himself a happy continuance of each; behold! a hand comes, which, having begun this pleasing web, seems now determined to cut it off entirely. The meaning of the last phrase is; "The web of my life, which thou hadst begun to weave, (the address being elegantly turned to God,) seemed to be a short work, and scarcely of one day's continuance; so that, having begun it in the morning, thou seemedst about to finish it before the evening." It answers to the former clause. Hezekiah, in the extremity of his misery, did not conceive that he should survive till the evening. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 13. I reckoned till morning, &c.*] The meaning of the first clause is, "When I found myself surviving till the evening, I then thought with myself, that the next morning would be the utmost term of my life: in the mean time I experienced the most grievous pains, as if a lion broke all my bones." He repeats the sentence of the preceding verse, *From day even to night, &c.* to shew how he passed another day of grievous pain. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 14. Like a crane, or a swallow*] That is, "My pains were sometimes so violent, that they forced me to cry

fail *with looking* upward: O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me.

15 What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done *it*: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul.

16 O LORD; by these *things* men live, and in all these *things* is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live.

17 Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul *delivered it* from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast

all my sins behind thy back.

18 For the grave cannot praise thee, death can *not* celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.

19 The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I *do* this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth.

20 The LORD *was ready* to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the LORD.

21 For Isaiah had said, Let them take a

“cry aloud; at other times my strength was so exhausted, that I could only groan inwardly, and bemoan my unhappy condition in sighs.” The reader will find in Bochart. Hieroz. pars ii. l. 1. c. 10. a copious illustration of this verse, and also in Scheuchzer on the place. See Pf. cxix. 122. and Pf. cxxx. 1, &c. which fully explain the latter phrase.

Ver. 15. *What shall I say? &c.] What say I more? he hath promised me, and he hath performed.* The meaning of the verse is, “The suddenness of my deliverance so greatly surprises me, that I want words to express my thankfulness. He hath heard my prayer, and hath performed all my desires; and the remembrance of the misery I endured will excite me more and more to renew my thankfulness for his unbounded mercies.” In the *bitterness of my soul*, is rendered more strongly by Vitringa, *discharged of*, or *made superior to, the bitterness of my soul.*

Ver. 16. *O Lord, by these things men live.]* The meaning is, that the promises of grace, attained by humble prayer, and their quick and ready application, give life to the soul; or, that divine grace, and the promises of divine grace, are the life of the soul, are the food and nourishment of true life.

Ver. 17. *Behold, for peace I had great bitterness.]* That is to say, “When I thought of, perceived, and feared no evil, and seemed to enjoy my usual health, then this terrible evil came upon me: but thou hast delivered me, and freely forgiven me my sins.” Thus Hezekiah does not claim exemption from guilt, but readily and humbly confesses that he deserved punishment, and was indebted solely to the divine mercy.

Ver. 18. *For the grave, &c.]* See Pf. vi. 5. xxx. 9, &c.

Ver. 20. *The Lord was ready to save me.]* JEHOVAH *was present to save me.* Lowth. It seems probable from this verse, that Hezekiah composed several other songs, some of which may be still extant among the Psalms. We may just remark from this passage of Scripture, that the proper fruit and consequence of deliverance from evils is thanksgiving, diffusing itself through all the actions of life. It exhibits to us a picture of our duty and state, who, redeemed, as we are, by the precious blood of the Son of God, from everlasting destruction, ought with all the powers of our souls and bodies to celebrate his name and glory, that our whole life may appear one continued thanksgiving. See Vitringa.

Ver. 21. *For Isaiah had said, &c.] Now Isaiah had said.* “It seems to me extremely probable, (says Dr. Mead,) that the king’s disease was a fever, which terminated in an abscess: for, in cases of this kind, those things are always proper which promote suppuration, especially digestive and resolving cataplasms, and *dried figs* are excellent for this intention. Thus the Omnipotent, who could remove this distemper by his word alone, chose to do it by the effect of natural remedies. And here we have a useful lesson given us in adversities, not to neglect the use of those things which the bountiful Creator has bestowed upon us; and at the same time to add our fervent prayers, that he would be graciously pleased to prosper our endeavours.” We may add further, that though it be admitted that a *roasted fig*, with white sugar powdered, be at this time used, and found to be a suppurative for a plague-boil, yet this will not lessen the reality of the miraculous interposition of Jehovah; because, in the present use, the work of suppuration is gradual and progressive; but the cure wrought on the application to Hezekiah was instantaneous. See Mead’s *Medica Sacra*, and the Philosophical Transactions, vol. xlvii. p. 387.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, To what has been observed before on the subject of this chapter, we may add,

1. That, since death is the common lot, it is our duty, before it approaches, to provide for it, both by a settlement of all our worldly concerns, that they may not at that time occupy our thoughts; and more especially by such a daily dying to the world and every thing temporal, as may make the day of our removal neither unexpected nor unacceptable.

2. In every situation, sick, afflicted, or tempted, prayer is the great relief. It is the heart’s ease to unboisom ourselves to God.

3. It will be a comfort in every calamity, and a joy in the hour of death, to have our conscience bear us witness in the Holy Ghost, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world.

4. God regards every tear which falls from the eye of his mourners, and will give them quickly the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

5. The prosperity promised to Zion was better to Hezekiah than the restoration of his health; as the welfare of the church, and the interests of the Redeemer’s kingdom, are ever dearer to the faithful, than any other concern, merely relative to themselves.

lump of figs, and lay *it* for a plaster upon the boil, and he shall recover.

22 Hezekiah also had said, What *is* the

sign that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?

6. One miracle served to confirm Hezekiah's faith; we have seen the glorious Redeemer work innumerable: and shall we distrust him?

2dly, In grateful acknowledgment of the divine mercy shewn him in his recovery, Hezekiah composed his sacred thanksgiving; and such memorials are not only profitable to keep alive our own gratitude, but stand as monuments of God's mercy, and an encouragement to trust him for future generations. We have,

1. The desperateness of his case. *I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave;* though in the prime of life, he saw the gates of the grave open to receive him: *I am deprived of the residue of my years,* which, in the course of nature, he might have expected to have lived; but his grief was more that he was removed in the midst of his usefulness, than in the midst of his days. *I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord in the land of the living;* no more frequent the courts of his house, and join in the ordinances of his worship, encouraging by his example the piety of his people. *I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world,* be no longer able to serve the interests of God among his subjects, or be the instrument of advancing their reformation and happiness; and also no more enjoy the company of those near and dear to him, with whom, in the house of God, he used to hold sweet communion. *Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent, or my habitation;* the tabernacle of his body, ready to return to dust, is quickly and as easily removed as the shepherd's tent. *I have cut off like a weaver my life, who, when his piece is finished, cuts it out of the loom;* and his sins might be regarded by him as the cause of his days being shortened. *He will cut me off with a pining sickness, or from the thrum,* alluding to the metaphor of the weaver, and acknowledging the hand of God in the affliction, in whose hands are life and death. *I reckoned till morning, or, set my time till morning,* concluding it impossible longer to survive; *that as a lion, so will he, or it, break all my bones;* the Lord's afflicting hand, or his disease, the pains of which were as acute as if he had been torn and gnawed by a lion. *From day even to night wilt thou make an end of me;* though beyond expectation he saw the light of another day, he had no hopes of seeing a third. *Note;* (1.) When we are in distress, we are too apt to sink into despondence. (2.) A solicitude for God's glory, and his interest among men, is the only truly laudable motive which can make a good man prefer a continuance in the body to a departure to his Lord. (3.) The gates of the grave stand open day and night; it becomes us frequently to think of passing through them. (4.) Our most settled abode here is but as a poor shepherd's tent, and our passage through time swift as the weaver's shuttle: it should, therefore, awaken our solicitude to secure a more durable mansion, that when the days of time are cut off, we may be enabled with joy to step forward into eternity.

2. His fervent prayer in his distress. *Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter;* sometimes aloud, in extremity of

pain; sometimes low, worn out with anguish, or so interrupted and broken were his prayers, through the torment he endured. *I did mourn as a dove,* bemoaning himself over his transgressions: *mine eyes fail with looking upward;* ready to close in death, despairing of relief. *O Lord, I am oppressed, or it oppresseth me,* my disease: *undertake for me,* to pluck me from the bars of the pit; or *it* may be rendered, *I have no righteousness; be surety for me;* as containing his humble confession, and his dependance for pardoning grace on that Redeemer, who, in the fullness of time, should be his people's surety. *Note;* (1.) Nothing can make a dying-bed easy, but confidence in the sufficiency of our divine Surety to undertake for us in the great day. (2.) Till our eyes are closed, our lips ought not to be silent; yea, when our tongue can no longer perform its office, to this dear Redeemer should our soul aspire, till we breathe it forth into his bosom.

3. His grateful acknowledgments. *What shall I say?* where words are wanting to express the gratitude I feel. *He hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it:* sure is every word of his promise, and now by experience he can bear testimony thereto. *I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul;* meditating upon the mercies received, and ashamed of his own sinful distrust: or the words may be rendered, *I shall go cheerfully all my years, after the bitterness of my soul;* the storm blown over, peace and prosperity shall crown all the years that God doth prolong. *O Lord, by these things men live;* by the word of divine promise, and the gracious providence of God: *and in all these things is the life of my spirit;* the power, providence, and grace of God, appearing thus wonderfully for him, gave renewed life to his soul as well as his body, filling him with faith, and love, and joy. He instances several particulars which call for especial praise.

[1.] His recovery: *So wilt thou recover me, and make me to live;* or *so hast thou recovered me, and made me to live;* and every new life bestowed justly calls on us to adore the gracious giver.

[2.] The pleasing contrast of ease for pain, health for sickness. *Behold, for peace I had great bitterness:* or, as it may be rendered, *behold, into peace hath he changed my great bitterness.*

[3.] The love of God seen in his case made the mercy unspeakably sweeter and more endeared to him. *Thou hast, in love to my soul, delivered it from the pit of corruption,* the grave: or, *with tender love thou hast embraced my soul, from the pit of corruption;* snatching me from it, as a tender parent, when I was rushing into the horrible pit. *Note;* Health restored is doubly pleasing, when we can see that it is in love to our souls.

[4.] His sins pardoned, fully and freely: *for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.* And herein every believing soul is called upon to join the thanksgiving of this pious king; for, (1.) Our souls and bodies, by reason of sin original and actual, in heart and life, are forfeited, and ready to fall into the bottomless pit of eternal perdition.

## C H A P. XXXIX.

*Merodach-baladan, sending to visit Hezekiah because of the wonder, hath notice of his treasures. Isaiah, understanding thereof, foretelleth the Babylonish captivity.*

[Before Christ 714.]

**A**T that time Merodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: for he had heard that he had been sick, and was recovered.

2 And Hezekiah was glad of them, and shewed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in

all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not.

3 ¶ Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, even from Babylon.

4 Then said he, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All that is in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them.

5 Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD of Hosts:

6 Behold, the days come, that all that is

(2.) The transcendently rich and gracious love of God in Christ Jesus hath interposed to pluck us from ruin, and to this alone we are indebted. (3.) All the bitterness which a sense of guilt and danger awakens in the conscience, God's love removes, and fills the soul, O blessed change! with joy and peace in believing.

4. His resolution to continue himself, and excite others to join him, in this constant and delightful work of praise: *For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: silence there reigns; no grateful songs ascend from the dust, and no more service can be rendered to God's interests here below, by those who are departed. They that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth; there God can be no longer glorified by faith or hope in his promises; but the living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: those whose bodily lives are through mercy renewed, and their souls spiritually alive also, these would join him in God's praise. The father to the children shall make known thy truth; transmitting to posterity the memorial of God's faithfulness, to encourage their trust, and awaken their gratitude. The Lord was ready to save me; instant as I called, relief appeared: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life; I, and all the faithful rejoicing in my mercies, will render the ceaseless tribute of our songs in the house of the Lord.* Note; (1.) Since in the grave we can no more glorify God, what now our hand findeth to do for him, let us do it with our might. (2.) Who shall praise him, if they do not who have been recovered from going down to the pit? (3.) While life and breath endure, so long should our praises last, and then we shall go where they will never end. (4.) Godly parents will not fail to transmit to their children the memorial of their father's mercies, and to encourage them to trust in the same promises which themselves have proved so faithful.

5. At the close of this history it is remarked, as in 2 Kings, xx. 7—11. that the sign was given at Hezekiah's request; and a lump of figs, at Isaiah's command, laid on the boil, either as a means to procure his recovery, or as a sign to assure him of it. Note; (1.) Though in sick-

ness our dependance must not be on the medicines, yet we are to trust God in the use of means. (2.) The great comfort of health is, ability to attend on God's worship, and be employed actively in his service; and this is the great end for which a good man wishes to live.

## C H A P. XXXIX.

*Ver. 1. Merodach-baladan]* Merodach was the name of an idol worshipped by the Babylonians, and Bel another; add these two idols, with the addition of מלך Adan or Adan, which signifies Lord, gave name to this king. Baladan is generally supposed to be the same person who is called Belshazzar or Belshazzar, and Nabonassar; from whom the famous computation of time, called *Æra Nabonassari*, took its name. He is called, 2 Kings, xx. 12, *Berodach-Baladan*. One reason for his sending this embassy, as appears from 2 Chron. xxxii. 31, was, to satisfy himself with regard to the miracle of the shadow's going backward on the king's recovery; for the Babylonians were, from all antiquity, famous for their astronomical knowledge.

*Ver. 2. And Hezekiah was glad, &c.]* This action of Hezekiah favoured of great weakness, as nothing more strongly excites the enmity of neighbouring states, than such an unseasonable display of riches: it favours of ostentation and vanity, both of them vices very unsuitable to that temper of mind, which his late cure, and the miracle that he had seen, should have wrought in him; and perhaps it favours something of impiety, since Hezekiah seems to have displayed his treasures as his own acquisitions, without ascribing the possession of them to the goodness and power of God. See Vitranga.

*Ver. 6. Behold, the days come]* Whoever considers the state of things at this time, the small power the Assyrian had, and that their king was tributary to the king of Babylon, must acknowledge that this was a striking instance of the divine omniscience; and, when he finds that this prediction was verified, at the distance of 150 years after it was pronounced, he cannot desire a stronger instance of the divine authority and prophetic spirit wherewith Isaiah was endowed. See 2 Kings, xxiv. 13. Ver.



in thine house, and *that* which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD.

7 And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

8 Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.

*Ver. 7. They shall be eunuchs, &c.* The Hebrew word סריסים *sarissim*, rendered *eunuchs*, signifies great officers employed about the person of the sovereign; and, as eunuchs were generally invested with these offices, the word *eunuch*, and a *great officer*, became frequently synonymous terms in the East, though they convey perfectly different ideas in our language. See Parkhurst on the word סרס and Dan. i. 3, &c.

*Ver. 8. Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah*] Hezekiah, convinced of his error, and perceiving that he had justly provoked the divine indignation, acknowledges his fault, and *humbles himself greatly for his pride*, as is recorded to his praise, 2 Chron. xxxii. 26. And these words afford us a strong proof of his humility; wherein he acknowledges the divine justice, and at the same time extols the great lenity and goodness of God, in sparing him, and delaying for a season that punishment which he might so justly have inflicted upon him. Calmet and others would render and understand the passage thus: "*What thou hast told me from the Lord is good: I willingly submit to it; but shall peace and truth continue in my time? May I flatter myself with the hope of so much indulgence and mercy?*"

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Though nothing could appear more promising than Hezekiah's late professions, and in general he did approve himself faithful, yet in some things he failed, as in the history here recorded, where his pride and vanity seduced him; so that, as it is observed by the sacred historian, 2 Chron. xxxii. 25, *He rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him.*

This history we have had before, 2 Kings, xx. 12, &c. and may just add to what has been already observed, [1.] How hard it is to be kept humble under distinguished mercies and this world's wealth. [2.] They will be courted in prosperity, who in adversity would be despised. [3.] When it becomes their interest, the enemies of religion will care for God's people; but their kisses are commonly deceitful. [4.] An affectation of displaying our improvements, wealth, buildings, &c. to strangers, and taking a secret pleasure in doing so, evinces the vanity of the heart, and often that most, when we affect to call them trifles. [5.] God will not see his children puffed up, without sending them the needful rebuke: it is well if, like Hezekiah, we take shame to ourselves, and confess our folly.

## CHAP. XL.

*The promulgation of the Gospel. The preaching of John Baptist. The preaching of the apostles. The prophet, by the omnipotence of God, and by his incomparableness, comforteth the people.*

[Before Christ 712.]

COMFORT ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God.

2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath

2dly, It was a mortifying message which the prophet brought him; but it was a blessed symptom of Hezekiah's gracious spirit, that so humbly he acquiesced in the divine judgment. It may teach us, [1.] That it is just in God to take from us the gifts that we abuse. [2.] Not to be desirous of, or value ourselves upon, the respect paid us by the children of this world: our intimacy and connections with them usually in their issue prove our plague. [3.] True prophets of God must not spare the faithful reproof; and true penitents will, so far from being offended, receive it with thankfulness. [4.] When God is pleased to resume his gifts which we have abused, or to punish us by afflictions in world for our sins, it becomes us to bear the rod with quietness, and justify him in his judgments. While we are out of hell, all our sufferings are infinitely less than we deserve. [5.] Though we cannot but be concerned about the evils which we foresee, yet every moment's respite is a mercy to be acknowledged.

## CHAP. XL.

THE fourth part of the prophecies of Isaiah extends from this to the 49th chapter; the principal argument whereof is, to explain the great mystery of the manifestation of the kingdom of God and his righteousness in the world, by the Messiah, and his forerunner and apostles. Though the argument of the whole is similar, it may be proper to divide these nine chapters into *four discourses*; the *first* in ch. xl. xli.; the *second* in ch. xlii. xliii.; the *third* in ch. xlv.—xlvii.; the *fourth* in ch. xlviii. The *first discourse* contains two sections, the former whereof, in this chapter, contains, I. A *prophetic discourse, first*, concerning the *manifestation* of the kingdom of the Son of God in the world; wherein the pious waiters for that kingdom are admonished of its quick approach, ver. 1, 2. *Secondly*, the *subjects* of this kingdom are exhorted to prepare their minds for its reception, ver. 3—5. *Thirdly*, the *nature* of this kingdom, namely, its spirituality, is explained, ver. 6—8. *Fourthly*, its effects and fruits, ver. 9—11. II. This section contains *doctrine* and *reproof*, wherein the manner of founding this kingdom, as most agreeable to the supreme wisdom of God, is defended against worldly wisdom, ver. 12—17.; and the vanity of idolatry, and of the nations and princes supporting it, is shown by a comparison from the power, truth, and majesty of God, ver. 18—26. III. We have in this section *consolation*, to be given by the ministers of

4 N 2

God,

received of the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

3 ¶ The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

4 Every valley shall be exalted, and every

mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

5 And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see *it* together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*.

God, directed to the afflicted church; wherein the foregoing prediction and doctrine are applied to its complete comfort, ver. 27—31. To which is subjoined, in the following chapter, a discourse conceived in the name of God himself, as well reproofing the nations, as instructing his people agreeably to the above argument; and making the fourth general part of the whole discourse. The scene of this prophecy is to be fixed at the time of the first promulgation of the Gospel, when God proclaimed to his faithful people that *consolation* which they had so long expected. The sacred writers apply this prophecy directly to the first preaching of the Gospel. It is generally thought that Isaiah composed this admirable part of his book after the defeat of Sennacherib.

*Ver. 1, 2. Comfort ye, &c.*] These are the words of the prophet, relating what he saw, or what he heard, in this scene of the manifestation of the kingdom of God, with its signs and concomitants. He relates, that he heard the voice of Jehovah directed to certain ministers of his, commanding them to comfort his people on account of the approaching advent of the kingdom of God. This command is from the Father by the Holy Spirit, and it is directed to those teachers of the church, whose office it is to deliver the word of God, whether it be for reproof, for doctrine, or instruction, according to the various states of the church. And in this case the first preachers of the Gospel are particularly to be understood. The message they were to deliver is this:—*Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people; speak ye comfortably to the heart of Jerusalem: that is to say, to the afflicted and heavy-laden; to those who had long panted for the expected salvation: proclaim ye good tidings; things pleasing to hear, and agreeable to their desires; which may deliver them from fear and anxiety, and relieve their burdened hearts.* For this is the meaning of the Hebrew phrase, *to speak to the heart of any one.* Compare Gen. xxxiv. 3. l. 21. in the original. It is evident from the Gospel what *consolation* was here intended. It was that which the apostle calls *everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace.* 2 Thef. ii. 16. The matter of this consolation is contained in three *articles*. The first, in these words, *Cry unto her, That her warfare is accomplished; or more properly, "That the determined time "of her laborious duty or office is fulfilled."* See Mark, i. 15. The meaning is, that the determined time of the troublesome duty, labour, and burdensome exercise which the people of God had hitherto undergone, was now past and fulfilled; that the time of dismissal into liberty, long wished and hoped for, was at length come. The prophet unquestionably alludes to the whole period of the legal economy; that time which our Lord in St. Mark's gospel declares to be fulfilled, and that the kingdom of

God was at hand. See Gal. iv. 4. The prophet's ideas here are taken from the station and functions of the priests in the temple, who, like soldiers, had their regular times of duty and discharge from *service*. Hence not only this *service*, but almost every other kind of hardship and servitude is called *warfare*. See Numb. iv. 23. viii. 24, 25. in the original. The *second article* is, *that her iniquity is pardoned; which is fully explained by Luke, i. 77. whence we learn, that a perfect remission of sins should be an attribute of that time of grace, to be opened by the great forerunner of the Messiah.* Compare Acts, xiii. 38. The *third article* is, *she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.* There can be no doubt that this passage is to be taken in a good sense. The Chaldee paraphrast renders it, *She hath received the cup of consolation from the face of the Lord, as if she had been doubly smitten for her sins: and Vatablus has it, "The Lord will confer upon her many "benefits, instead of the punishments which she might "have justly suffered for her sins."* The full meaning, according to Vitranga is, that God, though he might with great justice punish the sins of his people more severely, yet at this time of grace he would cease from his severity, would forgive their sins, and would crown them with a double portion of his blessings; wherein the prophet seems to refer to that abundance of spiritual gifts with which God would enrich his evangelical church, and whereby believers would have a proof of perfect remission of sins through the great atonement, and a foundation of the most solid comfort. In various places of the New Testament, this abundance of grace and spiritual blessings is spoken of. See particularly 2 Pet. i. 3, 4. Rom. v. 20. John, i. 16.

*Ver. 3—5. The voice of him that crieth]* It is manifest to every reader of this passage, that it exhibits to us the voice of a public herald or harbinger, who, at the approach of an illustrious king, commands the ways to be levelled, and made fit for his reception, easy and commodious for his passage. The metaphor is taken from a custom of remotest antiquity. Thus Arrian, speaking of Alexander, says, "He now marched towards the river Indus, his army going before, to prepare the way for him; for "otherwise those places could not have been passed over:" nor can we have a more sublime idea of the entrance of the Messiah into the world, than these words give us. We may suppose the Messiah, the great king of the world, *the glory of Jehovah,* marching in awful triumph along this road prepared for him in the desert, while *all flesh,* all the world collected together on either side, stand viewing, with interested and pleasing astonishment, the triumphant entrance of a king coming to redeem and to save. The evangelists have applied these words to Christ, and have thus

6 The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh *is* grass, and all the goodliness thereof *is* as the flower of the field:

7 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people *is* grass.

8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

9 ¶ O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jeru-

salem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift *it* up, be not afraid: say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

10 Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong *band*, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward *is* with him, and his work before him.

11 He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry *them* in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

thus given us the sum of them; *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* The words, *in the desert*, belong to both parts of the sentence. *The voice of one crying in the desert, prepare ye in the desert the way of the Lord.* See John, i. 23. The word *desert* may be understood both in a proper and mystical sense; for it is certain that John proclaimed this approach of the Messiah, *in a desert*, in the wilderness of Judæa; and thence took occasion to consider that people, among whom the kingdom of God was to be manifested, under the figure of a desert, to be levelled before the face of Jesus Christ; for the metaphorical expressions which follow refer to that preparation of mind which is necessary for the reception of Christ, (see Malachi, iii. 1.) that raising the low, that debasing the high, that refutation of all false and erroneous doctrine, and introduction of truth and righteousness, which was the consequence of the revelation of Christ. The *revelation of the glory of the Lord*, evidently means the revelation of *Christ*. Compare Luke, iii. 22. John, i. 14. ii. 11. The latter clause in the 5th verse is differently understood. Some read it as in our version; and others, *All flesh shall see together what the mouth of the Lord hath spoken.* But the better sense seems to be, *And all flesh,—all people shall see it alike*; namely, the glory of Jehovah revealed for the salvation of believers; *for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.* “That Jehovah, who is able to bring it to pass, hath authorized the delivery of this prediction.” We shall have occasion to speak more fully respecting the subject of this passage, when we come to the Gospels.

*Ver. 6—8. The voice said, Cry*] The beginning of the kingdom of God is presented to the prophet's view in extatic vision, together with its progress through various scenes, one succeeding the other. The prophet had now heard two voices of harbingers or forerunners. A third succeeds, which is finely introduced. He hears a voice, which commands with authority a new herald or preacher to promulgate something. The preacher inquires, ready to obey this high authority, what he is to promulgate: then the first voice explains the argument of the discourse, which is resolved into a proposition concerning the *flesh*, as *grass*, and its *grace* or *goodliness*, as *the flower of the field*; and an exposition of the proposition, wherein its sense and meaning are declared, ver. 7, 8. We may suppose this the voice of the Holy Spirit to the apostles and first preachers of the Gospel. A plain comparison is made between the *flesh*, ver. 6. and the *word of God*, ver. 8.; the

contrary attributes whereof are marked out. And there seems no doubt that the prophet, by the *flesh*, intends whatever men have depended upon in external things for their justification, which are vain, and will fail them; all human wisdom, works, and merits, availing nothing in this respect before God; so that *no flesh can glory in his presence*, 1 Cor. i. 29. But the word of the Gospel, delivering the true doctrine of salvation, will never fail mankind. The prophet may farther mean, when he calls the people *grass*, to mark out the weakness and vanity of those external ceremonies and carnal privileges wherein the Jewish people place their confidence. There are many passages in the Scripture wherein *flesh* is thus understood. See Gal. iii. 3. iv. 23—29. vi. 12. Philip. iii. 4. We may just observe, respecting the scope of this whole period, that it teaches us the true nature of the kingdom of Christ, and the new œconomy; that it is a spiritual œconomy; a spiritual and heavenly kingdom, very unlike the ancient œconomy, carnal, perishing, fading: that there is nothing in this kingdom and œconomy to *please the flesh*; that all things are internal, solid, true, and everlasting; that faith alone reigns here, fruitful in righteousness and good works. Instead of *the people* in the 7th verse, it should be read, *this people*, namely, the Jews. Vitringa understands the clause, *because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it*, as expressive of the power of the Holy Spirit, joined with the word of the Gospel, which should change the minds of men, should bring them to the faith, and from carnal make them spiritual. See Acts, ii. 2. Rom. xv. 19.

*Ver. 9—11. O Zion, &c.*] We have here the fourth voice, directed to the evangelists, to whom it is given in command, to promulgate the true presence of their redeeming God, and the king of his church, among all people. It is true, the words *the voice said* are to be understood before this period. *The divine voice said, ascend into the lofty mountain, O Zion, who art the messenger or declarer of good tidings;—the Evangelist.* Zion and Jerusalem are here to be understood with respect to the teachers and evangelists, who went forth thence, and diffused themselves through the whole land of Judæa. The command given to these evangelists is proposed in the 9th verse, and again more largely set forth in the 10th and 11th. They are commanded to *ascend a high mountain*, and in the utmost confidence, without any fear, to promulgate the *good tidings* concerning the presence of God their Saviour, throughout

12 ¶ Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?

13 Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD; or, *being* his counsellor, hath taught him?

14 With whom took he counsel, and *who* instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and

shewed to him the way of understanding?

15 Behold, the nations *are* as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.

16 And Lebanon *is* not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering.

17 All nations before him *are* as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.

throughout the cities of Judah. The expression of *ascending a high mountain* is emblematical, and the meaning in general is this; "Go, ye evangelists, throughout the land of Judæa; enter its synagogues, ascend its pulpits, throw yourselves into the assemblies of men wherever occasion allows, and from its high places, wherever you can, publish the good tidings, that their God, their deliverer, their king, their shepherd, their teacher, the great source of his people's righteousness and life, their long-expected Saviour, is come." See chap. lxii. 11. and Acts, viii. 2—4. The prophet goes on more fully to explain this command. The first clause of the 10th verse should be rendered, *Behold, the Lord God will come against the strong one, and his arm shall prevail over him.* Matth. xii. 29. and 1 John iii. 8. fully explain our prophet; whose meaning is, that Christ, preparing his kingdom in the world, would destroy the empire of the *strong one*,—of Satan; and deprive him of all his power. See Luke, x. 17, 18. John, xii. 31. The sense of the latter clause is, that Jesus Christ, establishing his kingdom in the world, and avenging himself upon his enemies, hath in his hand a *reward and recompence* wherewith to repay all his ministers; all those who believe and trust in him, and who place their hopes and expectations in his mercy. See Jer. xxxi. 10. The connection of the following verse is very plain, wherein the prophet opposes, to the severity wherewith God would treat his enemies, the equity, clemency, and singular indulgence with which he would rule his people under the new œconomy. The care of God towards his church, in every age and time, has been like that of a faithful shepherd. It is so spoken of under the old dispensation; and under the new, in full completion of this prophesy, the blessed Jesus hath declared himself *the good Shepherd*: John, x. 11. Nothing can fully exemplify these beautiful words of Isaiah, but a perusal of the Gospel, and a serious meditation on the inestimable love of Jesus Christ to his faithful people. See Boch. Hieroz. pars i. lib. 2. cap. 30.

*Ver. 12—17. Who hath measured the waters, &c.]* The prophet here, in the most sublime manner, celebrates the divine majesty and greatness, but particularly his wisdom. Rapt into an extacy, after he had described the beginning and the nature of the new œconomy, he sees that there would be many men of worldly prudence, who would hesitate at the methods of the divine counsel; and that the pious themselves, considering the extent and firmness of the kingdom of Satan in the world, the obstinate prejudices

of the Gentiles, and the power of idolatry, would have their fears and doubts of the effect and success of the kingdom of the Messiah; a spiritual kingdom, to be established without any external means, by the mere preaching of the word, and to oppose itself to whatever was *great or strong* among men. The prophet, therefore, occurs to these thoughts; teaching, that the divine counsel, though it might seem strange to carnal judgment, was yet founded in the sovereign and most perfect wisdom and knowledge of God, whereof the clearest proofs were discernible in the structure of this world; that God was wiser than men; that his counsel was maturely weighed; that it pertained to his wisdom and glory to establish and promote his kingdom in the world, rather by this method than any other; that he might put to shame all carnal wisdom both of the Jews and Gentiles; for that the *foolishness of God*, as it seems to carnal men, is *wiser than men*, and the *weakness of God stronger than men* (according to the apostle, whose whole discourse in 1 Cor. i. 22, &c. contains a paraphrase of this period): therefore he knew that this method of establishing his kingdom would have its certain effect; that this word, this faith, would overcome the world, and subvert idolatry. This is the connection, and this the sum of the passage. The prophet discourses concerning the prudence of the *divine counsel*, in the verses here marked out; and concerning idolatry, from ver. 18 to 27. In this period he first praises the prudence and wisdom of God, in constituting the state of his kingdom such as he had above described it, ver. 12—14. and herein he observes, that God has shewn the same perfection of wisdom and judgment in the œconomy of this spiritual world, as all men who have eyes to see must discern in the admirable structure of the natural world. He then particularly praises the justification of the sinner, recommended in the Gospel (wherein the kingdom of the Son of God should be founded), comparatively, and oppositely to some other righteousness or justification of Jews and Gentiles, which was esteemed as nothing in the sight of God; ver. 15—17. which contain an illustration of the evangelical cry in the 6th verse, *All flesh is grass.* The meaning of the 16th verse is this, that, though the nations might consume all their riches upon their false religion, though they might offer to God in sacrifice all the beasts on their mountains, and all the cattle of their fields; and though they might employ for this purpose all the wood of Lebanon, it would avail nothing before

18 ¶ To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?

19 The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains.

20 He that *is* so impoverished that he hath no oblation, chooseth a tree *that* will not rot: he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, *that* shall not be moved.

21 Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth?

22 *It is* he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof *are* as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:

23 That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.

24 Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown; yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also

blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble.

25 To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.

26 ¶ Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these *things*, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that *he is* strong in power; not one faileth.

27 Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?

28 Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, *that* the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? *there is* no searching of his understanding.

29 He giveth power to the faint; and to *them that have* no might he increaseth strength.

30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

31 But they that wait upon the LORD

before him: that he would admit no other righteousness, no other justification, than that recommended in the Gospel; that being the only ransom, that the only sacrifice which he would approve. What is said of *the nations*, the carnal Jews might apply to themselves. See a remarkable passage in Psal. l. 8. &c. to the same purpose with the present; Rom. viii. 6, &c.; and Vitringa.

Ver. 18—26. *To whom then will ye liken God?* ¶ *To whom, &c. or what resemblance will ye contrive for him?* Ver. 19. *The workman casts an image; and the goldsmith overlays it with gold, and worketh silver chains:* ver. 20. *He who is thrifty in his oblation, chooses wood that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare him an image which will not start.* Latter end of ver. 21. *Have ye not considered the foundations of the earth?* Ver. 22. *Him that sitteth, &c.* Ver. 26. *Who bringeth out their host by number, calleth them all by name, through the multitude of his virtues, [or abilities,] and the strength of his power: not one faileth.* The sum of the preceding period is, that human wisdom ought to yield to divine; that the mutilated Dagon should fall before the ark, and be thrust by from its seat to the threshold of the temple. Yet it might be objected, that idolatry was not only received, but also established among all nations, and that the princes of the world were extremely powerful who supported it. Such was the case; and it might seem impossible, according to human estimates, that such idolatry and superstition, thus supported, should be overthrown by such means as the Gospel professed to apply. The prophet therefore, occurring to these doubts, shews, *first*, the vanity of idolatry, and what

folly there was in it, both from the matter and form of idols, and the manner of making them, compared with the nature, excellence, and greatness of the true Divinity, the Creator of the universe; using nearly the same arguments which the first preachers of the Gospel used: ver. 18—22. *Secondly*, the vanity and weakness of the princes supporting idolatry, compared with the most powerful and wise Creator and Ruler of the universe: ver. 23—26. In demonstrating the vanity of idolatry, he first sets forth the crime which was committed in forming idols, ver. 18—20. Then follows the reproof of it, ver. 21, 22. which the prophet treats in such a manner, as if he himself was among the apostles of Jesus Christ; of whom indeed he was a true type, if you take the word in its full extent. The same spirit was in them, the same zeal: they were preachers of the same grace, promoters of the same glory of Christ; and they had the same earnest desire to bring the nations to the communion of the kingdom of God. See Vitringa.

Ver. 27—31. *Why sayest thou, &c.* ¶ The *third*, or *consolatory* part of this discourse begins at this verse, wherein the foregoing doctrine and prophecy are applied to the comfort of the church; who, in her various afflictions, complained that she had been neglected of the Lord. This complaint makes the basis of the consolation contained in this verse. The consolation itself follows; in the *first part* whereof it is shewn, that *God is not faint* or *wearied* with the care of his church; that it is not a burden to him; that his providence comprehends all things, and nothing is exempted from it; that his understanding

shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not  
up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and faint.

is infinite; for this is the meaning of the last clause of ver. 28. which is parallel to Pſal. cxlvii. 5. The *second part* teaches that the ſame God was able to *ſupply*, and would *ſupply ſtrength*, to the *faint* and *weary*; to thoſe among his people whoſe faith and hope were very low; which he would ſupport in the faithful even until the manifeſtation of the great ſalvation: that the faithful ſhould not fail, but perſevere until the time of grace, and reſume new ſtrength with that happy period. This doctrine or promiſe is propoſed in ver. 29. and is explained and illuſtrated by a ſmile, ver. 30, 31. See Pſal. ciii. 5. The ſpiritual ſenſe of this paſſage is plain; namely, that God will never fail thoſe who put their truſt in him. In this prophetic ſenſe it refers to thoſe apoſtles and firſt preachers, who, with indefatigable ardour, and unwearied perſeverance, *ran*, and *were not weary*, *walked* and *fainted not*, in the great buſineſs to which they were called; preaching Chriſt amid perſecutions, perils, and martyrdom, and every where proclaiming the kingdom of God. See I Cor. iv. 11, &c. and Vitringa.

REFLECTIONS.—1ſt, The concluſion of the prophet's meſſage in the former chapter ſpoke terror and conviction; the opening of this joy and conſolation; for though it be a needful ſeverity to wound, it is the more pleaſing part of our office to bind up the broken-hearted, and to preach the Goſpel of peace.

It would afford the pious Jews a beam of cheering hope amid the evils that were expected, and ſupport the fainting ſpirits of the poor captives, to have theſe great and precious promiſes ſet before them, and to be aſſured that, whatever they ſuffered, there was hope in the end. We have here,

1. The commiſſion given: *Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, ſaith your God; ſpeak ye comfortably to Jeruſalem, or, to the heart of Jeruſalem, and cry unto her.* [1.] The perſons addreſſed are *my people*; this is their character. [2.] The perſon ſpeaking, *your God*, your reconciled God in Jeſus Chriſt, in whoſe love his believing people are intereſted, and therefore may expect all that almighty power, boundleſs mercy, and infinite wiſdom can beſtow. [3.] The employment of God's miniſters is, to comfort his people, who are often greatly dejected through affliction, temptation, or corruption. [4.] The order is repeated, and they are commanded not only to ſpeak, but cry aloud; for though it be the privilege of God's people to rejoice, and his will concerning them that they ſhould be happy in him, yet ſometimes they are apt to write bitter things againſt themſelves, and can then ſcarcely be perſuaded to receive the bleſſings which God hath in ſtore for them.

2. The mercies promiſed; and theſe are, [1.] The pardon of ſin. *Her iniquity is pardoned*; however deep the die, and aggravated the guilt, it is pardoned freely and fully. The blood and infinite merit of Jeſus have obtained the pardon for us, and there is no condemnation to them that believe. [2.] Victory over all our enemies. *Her warfare is accompliſhed*. Chriſt, the captain of our ſal-

vation, hath vanquiſhed, for the faithful, ſin, Satan, death, and hell; and hath entered into the land of glory, as a conqueror, to take poſſeſſion. Though we have a warfare to maintain, while we are in the body, againſt fleſh and blood, againſt the world and the devil; yet by his grace thoſe who perſeveringly cleave to Chriſt ſhall be more than conquerors, and ſee quickly all their enemies put under their feet. [3.] *She hath received at the Lord's hand double for all her ſins*. God ſpeaks as a tender parent, whoſe love makes him think the corrections he had given his dear children beyond meaſure: or rather the words intimate the full ſatiſfaction which God hath taken of Chriſt our ſurety, exacting from him to the uttermoſt the deſert of our iniquities, and in conſequence pouring down upon his church ſuperabundant grace and bleſſings.

2dly, The ſcriptures of the New Teſtament have not left us uncertain of the perſon, whoſe voice ſhould cry in the wilderneſs. John, like the morning-ſtar, the har- binger of day, appears to uſher in the Sun of Righteouſneſs, and to awaken, by his preaching, the ſouls of ſinners to turn their eyes towards the Lamb of God who taketh away the ſin of the world.

1. The cry is, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make ſtraight in the deſert a high-way for our God*. Jehovah, our God, here ſpoken of, is the glorious Redeemer, whoſe eternal godhead is aſſerted. Our hearts are a deſert, till his preſence and love change the dreary ſcene. Where his footſteps tread, waters break forth in the wilderneſs, and ſtreams of grace and conſolation in the deſert. The preparation for him muſt be from him; and he that commands muſt give the hearing ear, the contrite heart, and diſpoſe us to welcome him into our ſouls; and then if we will open to him, he will enter in, and bleſs us with his preſence.

2. Where Jeſus comes, *every valley ſhall be exalted, and every mountain and hill ſhall be made low; and the crooked ſhall be made ſtraight, and the rough places plain*. Such will be the effects of his grace upon the ſouls of believers; thoſe who were ſunk into the loweſt deep under the ſenſe of guilt, ſhall be raiſed up by divine mercy and exalted: the proud, who in their own eyes before were high in conceit of their own worth and excellence, ſhall be brought low, and acknowledge their ſin and vileneſs: the crooked and rough ways of men of perverſe minds ſhall be made ſtraight, their errors removed, their corrupt practices reformed, and their hearts renewed in holineſs.

3. *The glory of the Lord ſhall be revealed*, the Redeemer Jeſus, the brightneſs of his Father's glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon, *and all fleſh ſhall ſee it together*; he being the univerſal Saviour, not of the Jews only, but alſo of the Gentiles: *for the mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken it*, and therefore no jot or tittle of his promiſes ſhall fail.

4. A farther commiſſion is given to the preacher, and at his requeſt he is inſtructed what to cry; which may refer to the weakneſs and impotence of the Babylonians, to detain the Jews in their captivity, when the Lord ſhould ariſe to ſave them; or, more generally, may be applied to

## C H A P. XLI.

*God expostulateth with his people about his mercies to the church, about his promises, and about the vanity of idols.*

[Before Christ 712.]

**K** E E P silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew *their* strength: let

them come near; then let them speak: let us come near together to judgment.

2 Who raised up the righteous *man* from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made *him* rule over kings? he gave *them* as the dust to his

all men, where the word of the Gospel is preached, as an alarming motive to attend to the great and precious promises of a better world, seeing this is so frail and fading. *All flesh is grass, weak and withering, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field, which, though it look more gay and beautiful, is as frail and feeble.* Such are all human gifts and greatness, which, however specious, quickly fade. *The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it;* then drooping, dying, all our beauty and glory languish: health loses its bloom, our possessions fade away, and death closes the scene: or when the Spirit of Jehovah breathes upon us in conversion, our past doings and duties appear poor and wretched; and those things on which we prided ourselves we count loss, that we may win Christ. *Surely the people is grass, all people of every age, rank, and degree; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth,* such perishing things are all merely natural excellencies; *but the word of our God shall stand for ever;* and therefore, when all beside perishes, and every earthly comfort or possession in death is for ever lost, they who make the great and precious promises of the Gospel their constant stay, will find, to their everlasting comfort, a portion which cannot fail them in the better world of glory.

3dly, Great was the joy when, by the edict of Cyrus, once more the Jews were permitted to return to their own land, and loudly was it proclaimed by those who had at heart the prosperity of Zion. To this the prophecy may refer; but it was evidently designed for the days of Christ, and respects his incarnation.

1. His manifestation in the flesh is proclaimed to sinners, as their greatest happiness. *O Zion, that bringest good tidings, when his ministry chiefly was exercised; or, O thou that bringest good tidings to Zion,* as addressed to John the Baptist, and all the ministers of the Gospel, whose office it is to proclaim the divine, glorious, and transcendent excellence of the Redeemer, in all his offices and undertakings for the salvation of sinners; *get thee up into the high mountain, to the most public places, such as the mount of the Lord's house. O Jerusalem, &c. or, O thou that bringest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength: lift it up, be not afraid of the opposition and revilings of men, who would persecute the preachers of the Gospel. Say unto the cities of Judah, where Christ appeared, Behold your God incarnate, the promised Emmanuel; a man, and yet the eternal Jehovah, come with the most joyful tidings that can greet a sinner's ears, to proclaim pardon, grace, and salvation, freely and to the uttermost.*

2. His power and all-sufficiency are declared. *Behold, the Lord God will come;* that desire of all nations, and especially the glory of his Israel; he shall come *with a strong hand,* mighty to save his believing people and punish his

enemies: or, *against the strong one,* to destroy the works of the devil, and break his hateful power in the hearts of men: *and his arm shall rule for him,* self-sufficient, and designing his own glory: or *against or over him,* the great enemy of souls, who must yield to this conqueror. *Behold!* with joy, ye people of God, *his reward is with him,* to bestow eternal life on all who faithfully stay on him: *and his work before him,* the glorious work of redemption: he came fully acquainted with the steps necessary thereto, and perfectly able and willing for the undertaking.

3. His grace and love are tenderly displayed under the character of a watchful shepherd. *He shall feed his flock like a shepherd:* his believing people are his sheep, and therefore with tenderest regard he feeds them in the green pastures of his ordinances; bestows on them the waters of consolation; and watches over them night and day, defending them from every danger. *He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom;* as when the cold is ready to kill the new-cast lamb, or it is so weak that it cannot follow the dam, the shepherd in his bosom bears and cherishes it; so does Christ the lambs of his flock, pitying their weakness, helping their infirmities, and in the bosom of his love cherishing and strengthening their souls: *and shall gently lead those that are with young,* whose circumstances are embarrassed, and trials difficult; he leads them gently as they are able. Let the under-shepherds learn of their chief shepherd to partake of his spirit, and tread in his steps, consulting the weakness, and ministering to the wants, of those sheep and lambs of his flock intrusted to their care.

4thly, The prophet speaks consolation to God's people, and declares the infinite power and wisdom of their God. The captives in Babylon need not fear Jehovah's ability to compass their deliverance; and faithful souls may ever be assured, that he, who in his condescension is their shepherd, suffers no diminution of his uncreated glory thereby. The description here given of our Redeemer is unutterably grand. Such his immensity, the vast abyss of waters to him are but as a few drops in the hollow of his hand; the expanded heaven to him is but a span; the ponderous globe but as a few particles of dust; and the mountains and hills, so prodigious in height and breadth, weighed in his scales, appear as grains of sand, and all nicely proportioned for the purposes they were designed to serve. In his amazing work of creation he needed no adviser; himself the fountain of wisdom, all receiving from him, none capable of adding to him. Before him the mightiest nations are but as a drop of the bucket, or the small dust of the balance; so light, as not to turn the poised scale. The isles he *taketh up,* or *casteth away,* as chaff, or the down of thistles. Were Lebanon with all its forests hewn down for fuel, and the innumerable herds which feed thereon

sword, *and* as driven stubble to his bow.

3 He pursued them, *and* passed safely; *even*

by the way *that* he had not gone with his feet.

slain for a sacrifice, utterly insufficient would they have been to expiate the sins of men: no less than the incarnate Jehovah could offer the propitiation, before whom all nations are as nothing, and, as if words were wanting to express their insignificance, they are *counted less than nothing, and vanity.* Note; (1.) The more we see of the Redeemer's greatness and glory, the more should our hearts be established in him. (2.) The less we are in our own eyes, and the more we see our own vanity, the more shall we admire the infinite love and condescension of our Immanuel.

5thly, The sin and folly of idolaters are here upbraided.

1. The absurdity of idolatry is here described. Mad in the pursuit of idol vanities, the founder casts the figure; and, lavish of their riches, they deck the senseless image; it is overlaid with plates of gold, or adorned with chains of silver. Yea, he that cannot afford an offering will have a god, though carved from a tree; and, choosing the wood which is most incorruptible, has it fashioned into shape, and fixed in its place. Amazing stupidity! to pay adoration to a senseless log, or expect support from that which cannot stand without being fastened. Note; (1.) The idolatry which hath prevailed so universally is a striking proof of the fall of man, and of the dreadful darkness of the human understanding. (2.) The continuance of this abominable practice in the church of Rome is among the strong proofs of her utter apostasy. (3.) Beware of spiritual idolatry: to place a confidence in gold, or set up the creature above God in our affections, is equally criminal as to bow the knee to a stock or a stone.

2. The prophet expostulates with them, *Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth?* From the visible creation the great Author's eternal power and godhead might be clearly seen, and traditionary notices of his being were handed down from the beginning; yet they degraded him into an image made like to a corruptible man, and worshipped him not as God; so that they were without excuse. See Rom. i. 20. A glorious description then follows of the great Jehovah: on the circle of the heavens he sitteth, by his power and providence upholding all things: on this terrestrial ball he looks, an atom in the vast expanse, and puny mortals appear but as grasshoppers or locusts before him. As a curtain he stretches out the firmament, and in the heavens, hid from mortal eye, spreads his radiant tabernacle. In his view earth's mightiest princes shrink into nothing; their persons, counsels, power, are all vanity. Fixed as their thrones appear, and great as they seem to worms like themselves, one breath of his displeasure blasts them as grass, and hurls them from the earth as stubble before the whirlwind.

3. He directs them whither to turn their eyes, nor more attempt to liken God, the eternal Spirit, to any corporeal form. *Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things;* read, in the expanded volume above, the legible characters of the Creator's glory; *that*

*bringeth out their host by number, marshalled in exact order: he calleth them all by names suited to their position and influence: by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth; bound by omnipotent power, each in his several orbit performs his revolution, and uses his influence according to his Creator's will. Since then God is so infinitely above the highest creatures, and all these the works of his hands, every representation of him by them must be a debasement of his glory.*

6thly, Their long captivity was ready to discourage the hearts of the Jews; and some of them, under the power of unbelief, were ready to conclude themselves forgotten and forsaken of God; for which the prophet here reproves them; and their rebuke is designed for our admonition, who are ready to faint when we are corrected of him.

1. He exposes their impatience and unbelief. *Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord; he disregards my afflictions; and my judgment is passed over from my God? he hears not my appeals, nor gives me the expected redress.* Note; (1.) Such questions as our impatience utters, must be silenced. *Why and wherefore do we complain? God is not slack in his promises, but we are hasty in spirit. The vision is for an appointed time.* (2.) It argues our folly, as well as sin, to suppose that God does not see our distress, or is not able to relieve us.

2. He reminds them of two things, which they ought to have known and considered: the infinite power, and unsearchable wisdom of God? *Hast thou not known? after all the wonders displayed in behalf of his people; hast thou not heard, from the experience of past ages, as well as the oracles of truth, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? His power is never exhausted, nor his government enfeebled: he is from eternity unchangeably the same, and, as the Creator of all, must needs be able to govern the work of his own hands; and therefore, however low his church may be reduced, it is not owing to weakness or weariness that he does not appear for their relief. He will save his faithful people to the uttermost, nor can be at a loss for the means, when infinite wisdom is joined with almighty power; for there is no searching of his understanding; therefore we are bound at all times to trust him, and patiently expect the salvation of God.*

3. When we do so, we are sure of being holpen. *He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength:* such as, seeing their own spiritual weakness and helplessness, apply to him, find him a very present help. When I am weak, then am I strong. *Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:* such as trust on an arm of flesh, and, self-confident, think they are able to extricate themselves from their difficulties, or, by the strength of their own natural endeavours, to overcome the powers of their corruptions; these shall prove their insufficiency, and utterly fail: *but they that wait upon the Lord, both for righteousness and strength, and in every trial cast their care upon him, sensible of their*

own



4 Who hath wrought and done *it*, calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD the first, and with the last; I am he.

5 The isles saw *it*, and feared; the ends

of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came.

6 They helped every one his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage.

own ignorance and weakness, these shall renew their strength, be enabled to stand in the evil day, supported under the sore burden of their temptations, afflictions, and corruptions: yea, more than supported, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, so swift and strong; and their trials shall serve to strengthen their graces, and lift up their souls farther from earth, and nearer heaven: they shall run, and not be weary, in the way of God's commandments, pleased in his happy service, and accounting it perfect freedom: and they shall walk, and not faint; though long their journey, and difficult the way, the everlasting arms of Jesus's love shall bear the faithful up, and bring them safe at last to their eternal home. Hold out then, faith and patience!

#### C H A P. XLI.

THE disputation against idolatry is continued from the preceding section, and here consists of a two-fold instance: in the former of which, we have, first, the address of the true God calling upon idolaters to dispute with him, ver. 1. Secondly, an argument which he produces to convince them of error, ver. 2—7. which argument is taken from a certain illustrious person to be raised up by God, whose appearance and attributes are enumerated ver. 2—4. and the consequence of it; namely, the wonder of idolaters, ver. 5—7. Thirdly, a consolatory apostrophe is added, directed to the afflicted people of God, and consisting of three articles; the first, directed to the church near the times of the Maccabees; ver. 8—13. The second, to the church of the apostolic times; small and contemptible at the beginning, but about to overcome the world, ver. 14—16. The third, to the Christian church afflicted in the first days of the Gospel; ver. 17—20. The second instance, directed against idolaters, contains also, 1. An address, summoning them to dispute, ver. 21. 2. The argument itself,—the prediction of certain future events of great moment; which is proposed in general, ver. 22—24. and is urged from the singular example of Cyrus to be raised up by God, and foretold by the prophet Isaiah, ver. 25—28.—and 3. The conclusion, ver. 29.

Ver. 1. *Keep silence, &c.*] This whole section, connected with that preceding, makes the fourth part of the discourse. The prophet, having in view the subversion of idolatry under the Messiah, had in the former section, from ver. 18. argued against idolatry, from the essence and nature of God, the Supreme Creator and Ruler of the world, being such as not to be represented by any corporeal matter or figure. To this disputation he subjoined a consolation, directed to the people of God, from the 27th verse to the end of the preceding chapter. Therefore, after this consolatory parenthesis, he continues or renews his disputation against idolaters by an argument taken from God's certain foreknowledge and foretelling of future

events: from which he selects that remarkable one respecting Cyrus, as the deliverer of the people of God, and the destroyer of Babylon: an event utterly unknown to idols and idolaters, and, therefore, an astonishment to the nations; and yet an event which God so long time before exactly foretold in every circumstance by our prophet. He who can thus predict future events, the prophet urges, must be allowed to possess true divinity. He who cannot, has no claim to that honour; for the prediction of future events depends upon the certain foreknowledge of those events; but that foreknowledge can be conceived only in the understanding of that Sovereign Ruler, whose providence is over all things. This whole section, except the consolatory part, is employed in proving this; and the prophet the rather made use of this argument, because Paganism so much gloried in its false prophecies and oracles. Here then God is exhibited as if appearing in public, and preparing himself to dispute with idolaters for his truth and glory; and, therefore, the islands and people, all the nations of the world, are summoned to plead their cause; and an awful silence is enjoined, according to the forms observed in courts of justice: for both in this and the 21st verse, the expressions and ideas are taken from those courts. The phrase, *Let the people renew their strength*, signifies, "Let them prepare themselves and come forth to the cause, furnished with all the strength of argument and reason that they are able to acquire."

Ver. 2—4. *Who raised up the righteous man, &c.*] *Who hath raised up the righteous man from the east; hath called him to attend his steps? Hath subdued nations at his presence; and given him dominion over kings? Hath made them like the dust before his sword; and like the driven stubble before his bow? He pursued them; he passeth in safety; by a way never trodden before with his feet. Who hath performed, and made these things, calling the several generations from the beginning? I JEHOVAH, the first; and with the last, I am the same.* Lowth. Every one sees that these words are so connected with the preceding as to contain the argument urged by God in proof of his divinity. The argument is taken from a certain great work and effect of the divine Providence, well known to those with whom the dispute is held: which effect appearing to be a divine work, and not possible to be ascribed to any other cause than the God of Israel, abundantly evinces that the honour of true divinity belongs to him and him only. This great work of the divine Providence is the raising up of a certain illustrious person from the east, celebrated for his justice, equity, and prosperity; who waged remarkable wars, conquered his enemies, and did other extraordinary things here understood. All these attributes exactly belonged to Cyrus; and there can be no doubt that he is here meant, from a comparison of the following passages in our prophet; ver. 25. chap. xlv. 1. 13. and xlvi. 11. which supply the place of a comment. See

7 So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, *and* he that smootheneth *with* the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the fodering: and he fastened it with nails, *that* it should not be moved.

8 But thou, Israel, *art* my servant Jacob, whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.

9 *Thou* whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou *art* my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.

10 ¶ Fear thou not; for I *am* with thee: be not dismayed; for I *am* thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

11 Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded:

they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish.

12 Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, *even* them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought.

13 For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not, I will help thee.

14 Fear not, thou worm Jacob, *and* ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel.

15 Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat *them* small, and shalt make the hills as chaff.

16 Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in

Vitringa. We may just remark, that the prophet here, as is very usual, speaks of the future in the past tense.

Ver. 5—7. *The isles saw it, &c.*] Bishop Lowth renders the 7th verse, *The carver encouraged the smith; he that smootheneth with the hammer, him that smiteth on the anvil; saying of the silder, it is good: and he fixeth the idol with nails, that it shall not move.* We have here the consequence of raising up this illustrious prince, namely, the vain and fruitless attempt of idolaters to hinder the effects of his appearance,—the demolition of Babylon and its idols, which the prophet describes in a lively manner, setting forth the vanity of superstitious men encouraging one another to make those idols wherein they so wretchedly placed their confidence. We learn from history, that nothing could be greater than the consternation of the nations upon the expedition of Cyrus, and particularly after his victory over Cræsus.

Ver. 8—13. *But thou, Israel, &c.*] The prophet here subjoins to his reproof of the nations, a consolation to the people of God, drawn from the same argument, as also he had done in the preceding section. See the analysis of this chapter. In order fully to understand this consolation, it is necessary to observe, that the scene of this exhortation is to be fixed in the midst of the period between the return of the people of God from Babylon, and the manifestation of the Son of God. To this church, afflicted, weak, and struggling with adversity, which, after the return from banishment, amid straits and difficulties, expected the redemption of Israel, and a completion of the excellent promises given to the fathers, this consolation belongs: and, indeed, it is peculiarly suited to the distresses of those times, when Antiochus particularly so much oppressed Judæa; and it is well joined to the preceding prophecy respecting Cyrus; a wonderful event, well calculated to sustain their hopes, and convince them of the

truth and power of their God. There is nothing in this passage of difficult interpretation. In the 9th verse, instead of *called thee from the chief men thereof*, Vitringa reads, *called thee out from the sides thereof*: an expression, which well denotes Mesopotamia or Chaldæa, and is used for it in Jer. vi. 22. xxxi. 8. ver. 14—16.

Ver. 14—16. *Fear not, thou worm Jacob*] We have here a new consolatory exhortation; which I refer, says Vitringa, to the people of Christ, mean, afflicted, despised, such as they were at the very commencement of the kingdom of Christ among the Jews. The disposition of the prophet's discourse leads us to this; for he begins with a new title, and promises a new blessing to the afflicted people. The prophet passes from the afflicted church of the Maccabees to the apostolic; between which there is often so close a connection, that what is said of the Maccabees in the letter, is to be understood of the apostles and evangelists in the spirit. Our Lord, in his discourse to his disciples, Luke, xii. 32. seems to refer to this passage: which contains an *address* to the afflicted church, agreeable to its state, with an *exhortation* to confidence, ver. 14. The *reason* of that exhortation, drawn *first* from the present help of God, as the redeemer of his church,—middle of ver. 14. *Secondly*, from a certain remarkable effect of the divine aid, which should exceed all human expectation, ver. 15, 16—where the ideas are taken from the threshing instruments, and the mode of threshing made use of in the east, whereof we have already spoken; and the meaning is, that this afflicted and despised people should not only stand against their adversaries supported by the strength of the world; should not only sustain their violence, but, assisted by the divine grace, should obtain the inheritance of the world; should subject great and mighty nations to their King and Lord; and in that very way and respect wherein they were enemies to the

the LORD, *and* shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.

17 *When* the poor and needy seek water, and *there is none*, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, *I* the God of Israel will not forsake them.

18 I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.

19 I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah-tree, and the myrtle, and the oil-tree; I will set in the desert the fir-tree, *and* the pine, and the box-tree together:

20 That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the

Holy One of Israel hath created it.

21 ¶ Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong *reasons*, saith the King of Jacob.

22 Let them bring *them* forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former things, what they *be*, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come.

23 Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye *are* gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold *it* together.

24 Behold, ye *are* of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination *is he that* chooseth you.

25 I have raised up *one* from the north,

the kingdom of God, should beat them down, and reduce them to nothing. See 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. This prophecy, we think, has not yet obtained its FULL completion.

*Ver. 17—20. When the poor and needy seek water*] Here, according to my hypothesis, says Vitringa, is described the state of the afflicted Christian church, after its happy beginning; particularly under Nero, who was the first public persecutor of the Christians. After the Israelites had departed from Egypt, and passed the *Red Sea*, wandering three days in the desert, they were in great want of water, wherewith God miraculously supplied them. Such was the case of the first Christian church: separated from the communion of the Roman empire, and of corrupt Judaism, that spiritual Egypt, they soon became exposed to a variety of evils and inconveniences, like the Jews after they had left Egypt. Alienated from the communion of Pagans and Jews, they seemed, as it were, about to perish in the wilderness; as the Israelites feared after they had departed from Egypt. And as the *Red Sea* was first presented to the Israelites, and seemed with its waves about to swallow them up, so also was it with the first Christians at the period alluded to; I mean the bloody persecution of Nero, which threatened total destruction to Christianity. At this time, it is no wonder that the minds of many were dispirited: in great anxiety and distress, wandering in this desert of the Gentiles, *they found no water*; that is to say, no comfort from the Roman state, or from the communion of the Jews. They were beset on all sides by enemies; exposed to their hatred, envy, and injuries, after the gate of persecution was once opened upon them. We have a parallel passage, Ps. cvii. 4, &c. This, therefore, is the meaning of the phrase, *The poor and needy seek water, and there is none*; which is not to be taken absolutely, but in a restrained sense; thus, "That they were reduced to such a state, that they could not enjoy the communion of Christ in their assemblies, with that freedom and comfort which they hoped for and wished." See Ps. lxxiii. 2. The phrase, *their tongue faileth, or is dried up for thirst*, de-

notes the great heat of afflictions which they endured at the period referred to, when God called his church to *walk through the fire*; ch. xliii. 2. God promises to these, *first*, in general, that he would hear their prayers, and would not forsake them; *ver. 17.* and, *secondly*, that the church should not be destroyed by this and other persecutions, but should be supported by his providence and grace; so that, at length, the whole *desert of the Roman empire*, in which the church then *wandered, thirsty, and persecuted*, should be turned into a garden; that is to say, should embrace the Christian religion; and an abundance of believers should bring forth spiritual fruits. The prophet subjoins the effect of this work of grace, *ver. 20.*; which should be, an universal acknowledgment, that this work of changing the Roman empire into the church and garden of God, was the work of the Almighty. And who indeed can look at the completion of this prophecy in the conversion of Pagan Rome, without *acknowledging that the hand of the Lord hath done this?* See Vitringa.

*Ver. 21. Produce your cause*] The prophet here returns to that part whence he had digressed, and makes a similar address to that in the first verse, to which we refer.

*Ver. 22—24. Let them bring them forth*] God, teaching his people the right method of disputing against idolaters, draws an argument, and urges it strongly, from the certain prediction of future contingencies of great moment, in their connection and order, and in their coherence with former and latter things. He who can do this, by the judgment of the true God himself, cannot be denied the honour of divinity. He who cannot, is absurdly worshipped and esteemed as a god. Vitringa renders the 22d verse, *Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen: shew us what things shall come first, that we may consider them, and know their last issue; or else, shew us things to come a long while hence.* Instead of that, *we may be dismayed*, *ver. 23.* we may read, *that we may look into it*; and *ver. 24. behold, ye are less than nothing*, &c.

*Ver. 25—28. I have raised up one from the north*] The prophet.

and he shall come: from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name: and he shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay.

26 Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know? and before-time, that we may say, *He is righteous?* yea, *there is none that sheweth,* yea, *there is none that declareth,* yea, *there is none that heareth your words.*

prophet changes his general argument into a particular one; repeating and urging more strongly the example of Cyrus, which he produced at the beginning of this discourse. Cyrus is said to be raised up from the north, as he came with his army from Media, which was to the north of Babylon and Judæa; and from the east, ver. 2. or the rising of the sun, as he came from Persia, which was to the east of Judæa and Babylon. It was from that country he came into Media. We may just observe too, that his father was a Persian, and his mother a Mede. It is plain from his edict in behalf of the Jews, that he called upon the name, or acknowledged the truth, of the God of Israel: and there can be no doubt that from Daniel and others, who were celebrated in his times, he learned more respecting the God of Israel. See Dan. vi. 28. The 26th verse is a plain address to the pretended diviners and prophets among the heathen; none of whom had been able to foretel this event, which God by his prophet had foretold one hundred and seventy years at least before it happened. See Joseph. Antiq. lib. ii. cap. 1. Bishop Lowth renders this verse, *Who hath declared this from the beginning, that we should know it? and beforehand, that we might say the prediction is true?* There is a remarkable gradation in the end of the verse, wherein the prophet says, "There is none who clearly foretelleth, or setteth it before our eyes; nay, there is none who maketh it to be heard of; who spreads any fame or report of it: Yea, there is none that heareth your words; none that heareth the least sound or whisper from you concerning it." The meaning of the 27th verse is, that, when this event came to its completion, God would raise up prophets and teachers, who should put his people in mind of what Isaiah and the other prophets had foretold; saying, *Behold, behold,* the things are come to pass; the good tidings, which Isaiah and others long since predicted. See chap. xxi. 6. The verse should be rendered, *To Zion first; Behold, behold them: and to Jerusalem will I give a messenger of good tidings.* The meaning of the 28th verse is, that God, by his prophets and teachers, had looked diligently round, and inquired whether there was any one of the diviners and prophets of the nations who foreknew or could foretel any thing of this wonderful event; but no one could be found; there was among them a profound silence and perfect ignorance. *Even amongst them,* more particularly refers to the Chaldean astrologers: see chap. xliv. 25.

Ver. 29. *Behold, they are all vanity—confusion*] *Behold, as to all them they are vanity—vanity.* This verse contains

27 The first shall say to Zion, Behold, behold them; and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings.

28 For I beheld, and there was no man even amongst them, and there was no counsellor, that when I asked of them could answer a word.

29 Behold, they are all vanity; their works are nothing: their molten images are wind and confusion.

the conclusion of the whole disputation; collecting from what has gone before, that the idols from whom the Chaldees and others sought the knowledge of future events, were false and vain; neither to be worshipped nor feared; that there was neither in them nor in their worshippers any thing whereupon to depend; deceivers and deceived, helpless, weak, and despicable. See 1 Cor. viii. 4. and Vitringa.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. A challenge given to idolaters, to try their cause before God; or, as some suggest, the matter of the controversy here intended is the divine power and godhead of the Redeemer, spoken of in the former chapter, which heretics, ancient and modern, have denied, who are cited to produce their evidence; though the first sense seems most natural. The court is set, the citation sent forth, silence proclaimed, the defendants of idolatry called to plead, and assured of a fair hearing if they dared bring the matter to an issue. Note; (1.) We may safely challenge the enemies of the religion of Jesus to do their worst, since their opposition will issue in their greater confusion. (2.) The truths of the Gospel will bear the strictest scrutiny; they who most attentively read their Bibles, and weigh the arguments there advanced, will be unmoved by the wretched cavils of infidelity.

2. He mentions an instance of his glorious power, to which the idols cannot pretend. The righteous man here described is Cyrus; and what should be done hereafter is, in the prophetic language, spoken of as already accomplished. (1.) When God calls us to his foot, we may safely commit ourselves to his guidance, though the way in which he is pleased to lead us be dark, and the issue unknown. (2.) All our enemies must bow before us, when the Lord is our strength and our Redeemer.

3. He represents the vain opposition of the idolaters. He also shews, [1.] The jealousy of the world and the devil against the incroachments of religion. [2.] That the sinner's heart is often exasperated by the means which were designed for his conversion. Note; How ready the wicked are to unite for purposes of evil! and should the servants of the blessed God be less active in his service?

4. He encourages his Israel to trust him. *Thou, Israel, art my servant,* and, being owned by him, will be assuredly protected; *Jacob, whom I have chosen,* separated for God's service from the world of idolaters, *the seed of Abraham my friend,* that high and honoured character, and, therefore, beloved

## C H A P. XLII.

*The office of Christ, graced with meekness and constancy. The Father's promise to him. An exhortation to praise God for his Gospel. He reproveth the people of incredulity.*

[Before Christ 712.]

**B**EHOLD my servant, whom I uphold ; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth :

beloved for their father's sake ; whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, whither they were dispersed, and said unto thee, thou art my servant, I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away, notwithstanding all their provocations. And this is most true also of the spiritual seed, those who yield to be saved by grace, and are faithful to the cause of God.

2dly, To silence the fears, and encourage the faith and hope of God's people in their distresses, they are called upon to look to the rock which is higher than they.

1. God, their covenant-God, is with them to strengthen, help, and uphold them with the right hand of his righteousness, and then of whom need they be afraid ? If he strengthen, what foe can prevail ? If he help, what greater support can they need ? If he uphold with his right hand, who shall pluck them from it ? *Note ;* (1.) If God, by his presence and grace, be continually with us, then in every trial, under every temptation, in the hour of death and the day of judgment, we must be safe. (2.) Faith in the promises is the sovereign antidote against all fear.

2. They shall be victorious over all their foes, to their great joy. Incensed as the enemies of God's people were against them, seeking with implacable enmity their ruin, confusion shall cover them, and, mighty as they were in power and policy, their strength shall fail, their devices be disappointed, whilst Israel victorious, like a sharp threshing instrument, shall beat them small as the dust, humble the loftiest, and abase the proud, and, scattering them as chaff before the wind, shall rejoice in the great salvation of God herein so gloriously displayed, which may refer literally to the victories of the Maccabees ; but spiritually regards the conquests of God's people over the great enemies of their souls. For, however weak they may be, as worms of Jacob, their Redeemer is mighty ; and, though earth and hell without, and corruption within, fright and trouble them, yet their mightiest inbred lusts, as well as their strongest persecutors, God can subdue before them ; and a day of joy indeed will it be to see them fall. *Note ;* (1.) Every Christian has a hard warfare to maintain, and there are many adversaries. (2.) Fear is often apt to beset us, when we see ourselves compassed about on every side, and feel how impotent we are to withstand our spiritual enemies. (3.) If God were not in such seasons to speak a word of comfort to our souls, we must utterly faint. (4.) Though the contest be hard, the victory is sure to the faithful soul. (5.) The greater our enemies, the more will the power of God be magnified in our deliverance. (6.) Whatever victories we, through grace, are enabled to obtain, our glorying must be in the Lord, not in ourselves ; the work is his, and to him must be ascribed the praise.

I have put my spirit upon him : he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

2 He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.

3 A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench : he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.

3. In their deepest distresses the people shall find him a very present help in trouble. When oppressed with thirst they cry, instantly shall their prayers be heard and answered. From the high places the gushing streams shall burst, in the vallies the fountains shall flow ; the very desert shall abound with pools and springs, and every beautiful and spreading tree spring up to shelter them.— A work so wonderful, that they would with wonder and surprize own, 'This hath God done. And this was eminently the case when, by the preaching of the Gospel, the Gentile world heard and turned to the Lord ; and such a wondrous change was wrought on the hearts of men, as if the desert had been clothed with trees and pasture : and such also every truly converted person experiences to be his condition, when the Spirit of God renews his heart. [1.] He is described as poor and needy, sensible of his deep spiritual wants and wretchedness. [2.] He cries, and is heard ; for prayer is the breath of an awakened soul. [3.] He thirsts for the pardon of his sins, a sense of the divine favour, and the supports of divine grace : and lo ! the Lord quenches his thirst with views of the redeeming Blood ; sheds abroad in his heart a sense of his love, and implants in his soul a living principle of grace. [4.] When this is the case, the whole heart is changed, the miserable sinful soul becomes pure, peaceable, heavenly-minded, holy, happy. [5.] This miracle of grace makes the finger of God evident ; and to him the praise of this glorious work alone must be ascribed.

3dly, The Lord, having comforted his people, resumes his controversy with the idolaters his enemies.

1. He challenges them to produce their arguments, let their Gods be brought forth and speak for themselves ; if they have knowledge, or prescience, let them shew it ; if power, let them exert it ; can they either describe the past, or foretel the future ? do good or hurt to their foolish votaries ? not the least : they are nothing ; a work of vanity ; and justly are they counted an abomination, who forsake the living God for such senseless deities.

2. God declares his own work and design. *I have raised up one from the north, and he shall come ; from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name :* this is to be interpreted of Cyrus ; by his father, a Mede ; by his mother, a Persian ; which countries lay, the one to the north, the other to the east of Babylon, whose princes he trod down as mortar, and proclaimed deliverance, in God's name, to the captives.

3. God, in foretelling this, convinces them of the vanity of the idols, who could never inform them of any such transactions. *The first shall say to Zion, Behold, behold them, and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings :* Cyrus, who issued the edict for their restoration ; or the

Lord

4. He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the

isles shall wait for his law.

5 ¶ Thus saith God the LORD, he that

Lord Christ, with his fore-runner John Baptist preaching the Gospel of the kingdom: events, whichever of them be referred to, concerning which the worshippers of idols foresaw nothing, nor had a word to plead in vindication of their abominable practices. Their idols evidently proved mere vanities, and their curiously molten images utterly useless and unprofitable.

#### CHAP. XLII.

THE second sermon of the fourth part of Isaiah's prophecy is contained in this and the following chapter, which may be divided into three parts; the *first* is consolatory, pointing out the Messiah as the light of the world, and the preacher of the Gentiles; ver. 1—9. whose illustrious attributes are described, ver. 1. The manner of his teaching, ver. 2, 3. The success and effect of it, ver. 4. The foundation of that success and effect, which is shown to be the grace and love of God, whereby Jesus Christ was called to this great work; ver. 5—9. The *second part* contains an exhortation directed to the Gentiles to celebrate the name of God, ver. 10—12. for a great benefit conferred upon them, and which is set forth, ver. 13—17. The *third part* contains an address to the Jews, admonishing them to attend to the subsequent reproof, ver. 18. The reproof is contained in ver. 19. 21. and the severe punishment preparing for them, in ver. 22—25.

*Ver. 1. Behold my servant, whom I uphold*] *Whom I will uphold.* Lowth. Or, *Whom I receive.* The discourse of God is continued, of the Father pointing out the Son, as the teacher of the Gentiles expected for so many ages, about to recal them from idolatry and superstition, and to enlighten them with the most pure and holy doctrine. St. Matthew has plainly and directly applied this passage, which is truly august, and worthy all attention, to Jesus Christ, Matt. xii. 17, &c. And in the voice from heaven, Matt. iii. 17. there is a manifest allusion to it. Simeon also, in his song, Luke, ii. 31, 32. has a plain reference to it, as well as St. Paul, in his discourse before king Agrippa; Acts, xxvi. 18. The ancient Jews also saw its reference to the Messiah, as appears from their paraphrase: "Behold, my servant, the Messiah, my beloved, in whom my word is well pleased:" and, indeed, the passage cannot with any show of probability be applied to any other than Jesus Christ, to whom these attributes peculiarly belong. He was the *servant* of God, obedient to his Father's will, peculiarly *received*, and in whose fidelity he absolutely reposed; faithful as a son; obedient unto death. See Heb. iii. 5, 6. Philip. ii. 7, 8. He was God's *elect* in the most emphatical sense of the word; chosen from the beginning to glorify his Father's name upon earth, the precious *lamb ordained before the foundation of the world*, to be the prince of his faithful people, the head of his church, the source of righteousness and salvation to all that should believe in him; that *elect*, in whom the Father's soul delighted, in whom he was well pleased; in whom he saw all the properties and qualities necessary for his great and important office; particularly those which fitted

him to be the great sacrifice of the world. (See Ephes. v. 2. Heb. x. 5, &c.); who was endued with *all the gifts of the holy Spirit*, which was not given to him by measure. See John, iii. 34. Isaiah, xi. 1, 2. lxi. 1—3.; and it was he who was to bring forth judgment to the Gentiles: that is, to deliver the canonical doctrine of religion to the Gentiles; rational, founded in principles of conscience, according to which every other doctrine of religion, all the opinions of men concerning religion, all the sayings, judgments, and actions of the Gentiles, are to be judged; which is, the doctrine of the Gospel, the canon of the divine judgment, the rule of the judgment of Christ to whom the Father hath delivered judgment, and of all those ministers who should establish his kingdom among the nations. See chap. ii. 4. &c. and Vitranga.

*Ver. 2, 3. He shall not cry, &c.]* This beautiful passage sets forth not only the method of this great teacher's instruction, but also the kind and quality of that instruction. Indeed, there is so close an affinity between these, that the one involves the other; for the manner of teaching ought to be conformable to the doctrine itself, and its quality; which is here set forth as peaceable and consolatory. In the first place it is said, that *he shall not cry*; —*he shall not strive*, according to St. Matthew: "He shall not be the teacher of a contentious disputative doctrine, calculated to obtain the praise of human wit and learning." *He shall not lift up his voice*: "He shall not cry; [*κρρυαζει*, St. Matth.] He shall not imitate those *Forsian* declaimers, who with great art and oratory set forth themselves and their parts to the public." Upon the whole, the meaning is, that the Messiah, endued with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, should appear among the Jews without pomp, without ostentation: that he should deliver a pacific doctrine, tending to reconcile men with God and with themselves, and to bind them in perfect friendship together. That he should by no means disturb the political state of empires and kingdoms; that he should propose his doctrine fully, with divine authority, but yet modestly, and without any boasting or vain display of himself; all of which was remarkably fulfilled in Jesus Christ. With respect to the other quality of his doctrine, that it should be consolatory, and perfectly adapted to raise and to heal the dejected and afflicted soul, the prophet expresses it by two metaphors, than which nothing can more strongly set forth the gentleness and meekness of Christ. *He will not break a bruised reed*. "He will not reject the most grievous sinners, whose souls are most depressed with a sense of their vileness and unworthiness. He will not reject the weakest beginnings of faith." *He will not quench the smoking flax*—which should rather be translated, *He will not extinguish the dimly-burning lamp*. The allusion is here to a dimly-burning flame, which sends forth more smoke than light, through the want of oil in the lamp; and it gives us the idea of a man, in whom the habits of the spiritual life are so weak, that, unless they obtain some supply, they seem about to perish entirely. Such as these the Messiah would succour and assist; (compare chap. lxi.

1—3.)

created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:

6 I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;

7 To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house.

8 I am the LORD; that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

9 Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before

they spring forth I tell you of them.

10 ¶ Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof.

11 Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up *their voice*, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains.

12 Let them give glory unto the LORD, and declare his praise in the islands.

13 ¶ The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies.

14 I have long time holden my peace; I

1—3.) and such as these Jesus in his ministry did succour and assist. The Chaldee paraphrase on this place is remarkable: "The meek, who are like a bruised reed, shall not be broken; and the poor, who are like dimly-burning flax, shall not be extinguished." The last phrase, *He shall bring forth judgment unto truth, or victory*, according to St. Matthew, signifies, "that Jesus Christ should propose the doctrine of evangelical truth, equity, and meekness, with that force and meekness, that it should never more be obscured or put out in the world, but that it shall conquer and triumph over all other doctrines whatsoever." The passage may be understood, that he shall make his righteous cause gloriously triumphant over all opposition. See Vitringa.

Ver. 4. *He shall not fail, nor be discouraged*] These words are to be referred to the success of this great teacher's doctrine; who, with admirable diligence and patience, without any remission of zeal or labour, should go on calmly and deliberately in its establishment, nor depart from the undertaking, till he had settled his doctrine and left a perfect canon of it to his disciples: a doctrine, not confined to the Jews, but to pass to the Gentiles—the isles of the earth, and to be by them received with faith and hope. Compare chap. li. 5. and see Vitringa.

Ver. 5—9. *Thus saith God*] The prophet here continues the address of God to the Messiah, and that in a very lofty and magnificent manner. First, the Messiah is animated to continue his course with alacrity and spirit, amid the many difficulties which his enemies would throw in his way, since God, by his sovereign decree, had ordained him for the Saviour of both Jews and Gentiles, and would support him by his most powerful aid, and by the singular care of his providence, ver. 5—8. The discourse being then turned to men, on account of this new prediction concerning the coming of his Son into the world, the Lord again urges the truth of his divinity, ver. 9. though possibly this last verse may more properly be assigned to the prophet himself. *To be given for a covenant of the people,*

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means, "To perform for the people the promises given by the covenant with Abraham." This refers to the Jews, as the next clause does to the Gentiles. The former things in the ninth verse, may refer to the Egyptian and Babylonish deliverances; and the new things, to that true deliverance whereof they were types; the illumination of Jews and Gentiles through the redemption of Jesus Christ. In ver. 7. we may read, *Them that sit in darkness from out of the dungeon.*

Ver. 10—12. *Sing unto the Lord, &c.*] The nations are here, in the most elegant manner, exhorted to praise and extol Jehovah, for the singular blessing conferred upon them, by calling them to his truth, and enlightening them with his grace. There is nothing difficult in the passage, though it will be greatly illustrated by Ps. xcvi. 11. xcvii. 1. ch. xxxv. 10. xlix. 13.

Ver. 13. *The Lord shall go forth, &c.*] JEHOVAH shall march forth like a hero; like a mighty warrior shall he rouse his vengeance; He shall cry aloud; he shall shout again; he shall exert his strength against his enemies. Lowth. These words are so connected with those preceding, as to contain the argument of the praise to which the prophet had incited the Gentiles: which argument appears to be, that sovereign blessing of divine grace set forth in the former part of this discourse, and for which he had called upon the Gentiles to give glory unto the Lord: but he does not end here. He continues the same argument, though under a different figure; for he introduces Jehovah, as a hero and warrior, who, having a long time borne the insults of his adversaries, at length comes forth, like a mighty warrior, endued with heroic strength, to oppose his enemies, to take from them the power they had long usurped, and to deliver his people from the oppression of that power. The reference is, evidently, to the destruction of the kingdom of Satan, of sin and idolatry, by the Son of God. Compare Matth. xii. 29. John, xii. 31. Luke, x. 18.

Ver. 14—17. *I have long time holden my peace*] These words contain a declaration of the divine counsel; wherein

4 P

God

have been still, *and* refrained myself: *now* will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once.

15 I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools.

16 And I will bring the blind by a way *that* they knew not; I will lead them in paths *that* they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.

17 They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven

images, that say to the molten images, Ye *are* our gods.

18 ¶ Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see.

19 Who *is* blind, but my servant; or deaf, as my messenger *that* I sent? who *is* blind as *he that is* perfect, and blind as the LORD's servant?

20 Seeing many things, but thou observest not; opening the ears but he heareth not.

21 The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make *it* honourable.

22 But this *is* a people robbed and spoiled;

God teacheth, that, by calling the Gentiles to his communion, he should effect a great change in the world; so that its whole œconomy should receive a new and different form. The whole discourse is metaphorical. We have in it, *first*, the divine counsel concerning the future time, declared by way of opposition; wherein the prophet, continuing the metaphor of the 13th verse, introduces God as a hero, who, after having contained himself *a long time like a woman with child*, at length, overcome by the love of his honour, aroused with great zeal, breaks silence, *pants like a woman in labour*, and at the same time *exhales and reforms his breath*, as people do who are in great eagerness and agitation: whereby the prophet means to express nothing more than the great zeal of God, to vindicate his glory, and deliver his people. The prophet, *secondly*, explains the work itself, determined by the divine counsel, ver. 15, 16. which expresses the destruction and desolation to be brought upon idols, and idolatrous states, and the blessings of the divine illumination by the Gospel: and, *thirdly*, we have in the 17th verse the consequence of the execution of the divine counsel, which should be the entire conversion of the Gentile world, after having beheld the triumphs of grace. See Vitringa.

Ver. 18. *Hear, ye deaf, &c.*] The prophet, having foretold the future illumination and conversion of the Gentiles, and the abolition of idolatry, takes an occasion thence to reprove the Jews for their blindness and stupidity in the great concerns of religion. See ch. ii. 5. &c. The meaning of the apostrophe is this: "Since matters are thus, and the Gentiles are to be illuminated by that Messiah who is to arise from amongst you, and who is to destroy all idolatry, and as these events are daily hastening more and more to their completion; what *blindness*, O children of Israel, what folly and madness do you betray? what *deafness* also, or rebellion, against the word of God, that, while you follow the idolatries of the Gentiles, and fall into the most severe judgments of God, you are so stupid as not to discern that God severely punishes you for this apostacy! Attend, therefore, diligently to those things which I now foretel, as most certainly to come to pass; and while you behold,

"look carefully and diligently into the matter itself. Do not consider it negligently or perfunctorily, but with that study and attention which its importance and your duty absolutely demand."

Ver. 19, 20. *Who is blind, but my servant; &c.*] As it might be doubted who were the *blind* and *deaf* mentioned in the preceding verse, the prophet here points them out: "I have exhibited (says God) the Gentiles in the foregoing discourse as *blind* and *deaf*, to be enlightened by the doctrine of the Messiah, and brought to the obedience of his laws. But how much more *blind* are you, how much more *deaf*, ye degenerate sons of Jacob! who, though the only people favoured with my word, the only people peculiarly chosen by me to the profession of the true religion, and from whom it might and ought to have been expected, that as the *messengers of God* you should have taught true religion to others; yet, have not only no care or regard for it, but condemn this most excellent religion of yours, dishonour and corrupt it, and, on this account, subject yourselves to the divine punishment; at which, nevertheless, not reflecting on the greatness of your crimes and rebellion as its true cause, you stand astonished, and, though advised and instructed, still nothing the better, nor returning to duty; *having ears, but hearing not.*" *He that is perfect*, in the 19th verse, means, "He who is perfectly instructed in the truth and knowledge of God, from the law of Moses, and the revelation vouchsafed to the Jews."

Ver. 21. *The Lord is well pleased*] *Jehovah took delight in him for his righteousness' sake; he hath magnified him by his law, and made him honourable.* Vitringa. The meaning of the passage is very clear from this translation. God, in every reproof of his people, is careful to shew that the fault of their aberrations was not his, but theirs. He liberally provided whatever could be thought of for their salvation, and the stability of their state. He had given them excellent laws; he had increased and honoured them; had made, and was willing to make them glorious among their neighbours. But they had been wanting to themselves, had despised his laws, and incurred his just vengeance.

Ver.



they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison-houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore.

23 Who among you will give ear to this? who will hearken and hear for the time to come?

*Ver. 22—24. But this is a people robbed, &c.]* It was reasonably to be expected, that the Jews, blessed with so great privileges, would have been greatly honoured and respected: but, abusing those privileges, their case and situation has been in various periods what the prophet describes in this verse, and the subsequent part of the chapter; broken, plundered, spoiled, despised by other nations, subject to the insolence of conquerors, shut up in prisons, trod upon, abused and punished in such a manner, as may justly raise the greatest commiseration. Their history, since the crucifixion of the Redeemer, supplies us with one continued detail of their miseries and afflictions; yet,—which is most astonishing,—Who among them giveth ear? Who heareth for the time to come? Who among them considereth the cause of their sufferings, and becometh obedient to the law of Christ.

*Ver. 25. Therefore he hath poured, &c.]* The force and elegance of the metaphor in this verse is very great. Of all natural evils which affect the human mind, which a rouse and awaken it, none do so with greater quickness than fire; than a mighty flame, encompassing a man on every side. No sleep, no lethargy is so great, which this will not shake off; and yet the stupor and insensibility of the Jews is here represented to be so great, that in the midst of fire and flame, which they might and ought to think was kindled by God, they inquired not into the causes of this judgment. They knew them not, nor considered them; but, persisting in their impenitence and stupidity, applied not to God in repentance and faith, nor humbled themselves before him. See Amos, ii. 4, 5. and Vitringa.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, That these words belong to Christ we are assured, Mat. xii. 17—21. We have,

1. His designation to his office, and qualification for it. *Behold!* with wonder and love, *my servant*, though equal with the Father as touching his Godhead, yet humbling himself to the form of a servant, for us men and our salvation; *whom I uphold*; for as men, Christ received power and strength from the Father, to enable him to accomplish the arduous work of redemption; or *on whom I lean*, expressive of the confidence that God reposed in him, to fulfil the work appointed him, as much to his glory as his faithful people's good; *mine elect*, chosen and designed for the work; *in whom my soul delighteth*, his obedience, sufferings, sacrifice, and all that he did, being always highly pleasing to his Father; *I have put my Spirit upon him*, fully qualifying and enabling him for the execution of all he hath undertaken. *Note*; (1.) The highest honour is to be a servant of God. (2.) There never was but one under the sun in whom, for his own sake, God could say my soul delighteth. (3.) If God bid us minister, he will supply the ability.

24 Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the LORD, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law.

25 Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of

2. His exercise of his office. *He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles*, the Gospel, which is to be the rule and guide of all his converted people: *He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street*, as coming with human pomp and grandeur, for his kingdom was not of this world. *A bruised reed shall he not break*, so tender are his compassions towards the weak and tempted, who are cast down under their trials, but supported and strengthened by him, that they may not utterly faint; *and the smoking flax shall he not quench*, where the smallest gracious appearances are seen, he will not despise, but cherish them, and fan the smoking flax into a flame: *he shall bring forth judgment unto truth*, accompanying the word of his truth with divine power. *He shall not fail, nor be discouraged amid the arduous works in which he shall be engaged, till he have set judgment in the earth*, established his glorious Gospel, which is so productive of judgment and righteousness among men, *and the isles shall wait for his law*; the distant nations of Gentiles offering themselves willing scholars at the feet of his ministers. The LXX, from whom the passage is quoted, Mat. xii. 21. render it, *And in his name shall the Gentiles trust*.

2dly, God, having ushered in the glorious personage appointed by him for the salvation of his faithful people, here encourages and authorizes him to proceed in his undertaking.

1. He gives him his orders, as the Almighty Creator of all, able abundantly to support him in the exercise of his office. He calls him *in righteousness*, in a way wherein the divine perfections were eminently to be magnified; or with righteousness, being himself a righteous person, and who in his nature and practice knew no sin: he promises to uphold and keep him, that no difficulties may discourage, nor enemies prevail against him; to give him for a covenant of the people, to be their great covenant-head, as through him all the blessings of the covenant are to be freely received: two of the most eminent of which are mentioned, [1.] He is given *for a light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes*, both to be the light of the world which lay in darkness and the shadow of death, and also to bestow power on the fallen mind of man to see this light of life, without which it shineth in darkness. *Note*; The mind of man, yea, of the wisest, continues in utter darkness respecting spiritual things, without divine illumination. [2.] He is sent *to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house*; we are by nature the slaves of sin and Satan; and even when we have light enough through grace to see and deplore our misery, we have no power to set ourselves at liberty; it is the Lord Jesus who must interpose to break our bands, and bring us forth into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

2. He confirms his commission by his great name, Je-

battle: and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.

hovah, who, in the investiture of the Redeemer, intends to exalt his own glory, and will not suffer idols to be his rivals; but will condignly punish those who ascribe to them the praise due to him alone. And as he has fulfilled his former promises, so will he also accomplish the new things that he now declares, relative to the deliverance of the Jews under Cyrus, the incarnation of the Messiah, and the success of his Gospel; which, *before they spring forth* into act, he foretels, and shall be as surely fulfilled in their season, as any past prophecies had been. *Note*; God hath still new mercies in store; while we have faith to trust him, he will not, cannot fail us.

3. The whole church is called upon to exalt God's praise for the redemption of Jesus. From the ends of the earth, to which the Gospel should be spread, the grateful song must arise; those who go down to the sea, the Tyrians and Phœnicians, and other maritime nations, the Arabians, and the most savage inhabitants of the desert and the rock, civilized by the preaching of the Gospel, must join in the work of praise, till the sound should be universal, and the knowledge of the glory of God be wafted to the most distant isles of the sea. This was in a measure the case under the ministry of the apostles, and we expect a still more glorious day, when praises for redeeming love shall be sung from pole to pole.

3dly, We have,

1. The victory which the Lord will obtain over his enemies. As a man of war he will rush upon them with a cry, and prevail, his Gospel being made effectual to the casting down all the strong-holds of darkness. For a long while he seemed to pay no regard to the heathen world, winking at the times of their ignorance; but now he sends his elect minister Jesus, he will destroy and devour at once; they who submit not to the calls of his mercy, must perish under the rod of his judgments. The greatest, high as mountains, are not too mighty to escape; nor the least, though mean as the grass, so small as to be overlooked: and every impediment shall be removed, as at the passage of Israel through the Red Sea, that his word may have free course, and run, and be glorified.

2. He will bring home his faithful people to himself. *I will bring the blind*, those that were spiritually ignorant of the ways of God, *by a way that they knew not*, even Christ the living way, hid from ages and generations, but now revealed to the Gentiles; *I will lead them in paths that they have not known*, the path of holiness and life; *I will make darkness light before them*, shining on their path, and making it plain before their faces; *and crooked things straight*, removing all obstructions, and forming their once crooked and perverse ways by his divine grace, conformably to his holy mind and word. *These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them, but perfect in the faithful the salvation here begun.*

3. The idolaters, being converted, shall now be made ashamed of their idols; or those who persisted in their worship be confounded to find how little they can profit them in a day of wrath.

4thly, We have,

1. A general exhortation addressed to the spiritually deaf and blind, whether Jews or Gentiles, to hear and see. For though the mere exercise of their natural faculties was by no means sufficient for the attaining of divine knowledge, yet, as they had ears to hear, and eyes to see the word of truth, they were bound to make use of the appointed means. *Note*; They who wilfully turn away their eyes from the truth, and will not use them to examine the scriptures, are justly given up to judicial blindness.

2. A sharp reproof is given to the Jewish people. *Who is blind but my servant*, or *deaf as my messenger that I sent*? or, as some render it, *those to whom I send my messenger*? They who had every opportunity of spiritual knowledge, were more criminally ignorant than their Gentile neighbours, and their teachers blind leaders of the blind. *Who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant*? the Scribes and Pharisees, who most boasted of their high attainments, were most obstinate in rejecting Christ and his Gospel. *Seeing many things*, or pretending to see at least, *but thou observest not* the evidences of Christ's divine mission in his miracles; *opening the ears* to the preaching of Christ and his apostles; *but he beareth not* to any saving purpose, but cavilled, and rejected the counsel of God against their own souls. *Note*; (1.) Spiritual blindness is grievously common, even among the professors of religion. (2.) They who have the highest conceit of their own natural excellence, are most grievously ignorant both of God, his law, and their own vile hearts. (3.) It is a deplorable case when they, who should be teachers of others, are blind and erroneous themselves. (4.) None usually are so obstinate in prejudice and ignorance as those who, having assumed the character of God's messengers, count it a dishonour to have it but suggested that they themselves are out of the way. (5.) They who, through ignorance in their ministry, mislead and ruin others' souls as well as their own, may expect to receive greater damnation.

3. God will be glorified, notwithstanding their obstinacy. *The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable*; either by the execution of just judgment on the rejecters of his truth, or as the words may refer to Christ, for whose righteousness' sake God is well pleased with all who are found in him; since, by his obedience unto death, he hath in the highest measure magnified the divine law in their behalf, and restored the honour it had lost by their violations of it.

4. The destruction of the whole people is foretold, because of their rejection of the Gospel. They are given up to the Romans to be robbed, spoiled, and snared; dragged from their lurking-places, and imprisoned, without prospect of deliverance. They would not be admonished of this judgment coming upon them, till it was impossible to avert it. God's hand in their ruin was evident, and acknowledged even by Titus, their destroyer, because of their obstinate disobedience. Therefore wrath to the uttermost overtook them, and to this day the heavy stroke is still upon them; yet they will not acknowledge the rejection

## C H A P. XLIII.

*The Lord comforteth the people with his promises: he appealeth to the people for witness of his omnipotency: he foretelleth to them the destruction of Babylon, and his wonderful deliverance of his people: he reproveth the people as inexorable.*

[Before Christ 712.]

**B**UT now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called *thee* by thy name; thou art mine.

2 When thou passest through the waters,

jection of Jesus as the cause, nor lay it to heart; the veil being yet unremoved, and their measure of chastisement not yet full. *Note;* (1.) Of the many who hear God's word, too few pay it the attention that it deserves. (2.) Disregard of God's warnings is sure to bring down his wrath. (3.) All suffering comes ultimately from God's hand, whatever instruments are employed. (4.) Sin, which now provokes God's anger against the sinner in temporal afflictions, will, if unrepented of, shortly kindle that fire of eternal wrath which never can be quenched.

## C H A P. XLIII.

THE second part of this discourse is contained in this chapter, and the five first verses of the 44th. See the analysis of the preceding chapter. We have here, *first*, the *consolatory* part, containing a general consolatory proposition, supporting and raising the hope of the church. The first special promise, of preserving the church amid the calamities and afflictions of the future time, ver. 2, 3. The second promise, concerning the destruction of the enemies of the church, ver. 4. The third, concerning its amplification and glory, from the conflux of Jews and Gentiles, ver. 5—7. We have, *secondly*, a *doctrinal* part, calculated to confirm the faithful in the true faith, and to teach them by what method they may best convince the degenerate Jews and idolatrous Gentiles of the truth of God; namely, from his illustrious doings, and from his prediction of those doings. This part contains a direct address to the believers and teachers of the church, whose business it should be to teach the idolatrous Jews and Gentiles the true divinity of God, from the certain prediction of those illustrious events, which our prophet had mentioned before, and which had been foretold no less by other prophets than by him, ver. 8—10. Then the great work of the deliverance of the people from Babylon, by Cyrus, is claimed to the God of Israel only, as the avenger and deliverer of his church; which is first illustrated by the preceding deliverance from Sennacherib, foretold by God, ver. 11.—13. The great deliverance by Cyrus is then described, ver. 14, 15. and is compared with the deliverance of the people from Egypt, ver. 16, 17. The prophet then foretels a new work of the divine providence and grace, far superior to those foregoing; namely, the conversion of the Gentiles, ver. 18—21. *Thirdly*, this

*I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.*

3 For I *am* the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.

4 Since thou wast precious in my fight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.

chapter contains a *reproof*, wherein God teaches and convinces his people, that these great benefits to be conferred upon the church are due to his grace, not to the merits of the Jewish people; wherein we have a conviction of the imperfect worship which the people had offered to God, and wherein they could not suppose any merit, ver. 22—24. a declaration wherein the grace of God alone is shewn to be the principal cause of these benefits, ver. 25. and a reproof of the crimes committed by the nobles, and by the nation, whereby they had merited all their punishments, ver. 26—28. The exhortatory part continues the consolation by a new and gracious address; and again foretels to the church the same benefit of grace, and the gift of the Holy Spirit which was spoken of before. See ch. xlv. ver. 1—5.

*Ver. 1. O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel]* Jacob and Israel are here to be understood mystically, of the true and spiritual Israel; for *they are not all Israel who are of Israel*, says the apostle, Rom. ix. 6. Vitringa thinks that the prophet here addresses the true believers of his own times; though there is no reason to confine the address, which may also refer to believers under the Gospel; for the consolation here offered unquestionably refers to the true Israelites of all times.

*Ver. 2. When thou passest through the waters, &c.]* The general sense of the promise in this verse is, that God will so support and protect his spiritual church in those adversities and calamities which seem to threaten its destruction, that it shall never be destroyed; and that true believers shall always be supported by the hand of the Almighty. The expression in this verse seems to allude to some preceding events in the Jewish history, and to have respect to some succeeding ones. See Psal. lxvi. 12.

*Ver. 3. For I am the Lord thy God]* The Almighty by his prophet proceeds to assure his church of his particular affection towards her, by a remarkable proof of that affection; which is, that the evils and calamities threatening the destruction of the Jewish nation, had by his providence been averted from them, and turned upon the Egyptians, Ethiopians, and Sabeans. The prophet alludes to what is foretold in the 20th chapter.

*Ver. 4. Since thou wast precious, &c.]* This verse refers, according to Vitringa, to the deliverance from Sennacherib, whereby God abundantly shewed that the Jewish nation

was

5 Fear not; for I *am* with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west;

6 I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth;

7 *Even* every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.

8 ¶ Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears.

9 Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses,

that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, *It is truth.*

10 *Ye are* my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I *am* he: before me there was no god formed, neither shall there be after me.

11 I, *even* I, *am* the LORD; and beside me *there is* no saviour.

12 I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when *there was* no strange god among you: therefore ye *are* my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I *am* God.

13 Yea, before the day *was* I *am* he; and *there is* none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it?

was precious and honourable in his sight; and the men, in the last clause, refers to the Assyrians, and the people to the Chaldees. The Assyrians suffered a fearful slaughter under their king Sennacherib, for the sake of the church; and the empire of the Chaldees was to be overturned by the Medes and Persians, to procure the deliverance of the people of God: in both which instances God abundantly testified that his church was precious and honourable in his sight, and much beloved by him.

Ver. 5—7. *Fear not*] You see Isaiah here, in spirit, foretelling much greater and more important things than he seemed about to declare. We must observe, that while he appears to speak of one thing only, two are understood: the less includes the greater. Speaking literally and properly of the collection of the dispersed church from Babylon,—a more noble collection, the spiritual one of the Jews and Gentiles to the church of Christ, was in his view; and this is described in expressions taken from the external collection of the church from Babylon, and the restoration of the Jews under the Maccabees; exactly in the same manner as ch. xi. 12. which should be compared with this place. The 7th verse plainly shews, that the spiritual seed of Israel is spoken of. *Every one who is called by my name*, means, “every one who is truly my son;” for to be called by the name of any one, is to be his son. See ch. xlv. 5.

Ver. 8—10. *Bring forth the blind, &c.*] Vitringa renders the 9th verse, *Let, &c. Who among them could declare this? Either let them tell us what shall first happen, and bring their witnesses, that they may be justified; or let them [be content to] hear, and say, this is truth.* The scope of this period is, to confirm the people of God in their belief of the true Divinity, from those remarkable events so clearly foretold by the prophet; and to instruct them, to convince the degenerate Jews, and idolatrous Gentiles, concerning this same belief from the same arguments; namely, from the deliverance of the people out of Babylon by Cyrus, and the mission of Jesus Christ, as the great prophet to convert the Gentiles; which again in the subsequent part of this chapter are repeated and set forth under different

figures. *The blind people that have eyes, &c.* mean the blind and idolatrous Jews. See the preceding chapter, ver. 19. and ch. vi. 9, 10. *Ye are my witnesses, even my servant whom I have chosen*, mean the true believers among the people: or more particularly the witnesses may signify the prophets and teachers of the church; and my servant, may mean Israel, or the believing people in general. See ch. xli. 8. xlv. 1. More remotely, the Messiah, peculiarly God's servant, and the apostles, his witnesses, may be meant. See Vitringa.

Ver. 11—13. *I, even I, am the Lord, &c.*] *I even I, &c.* ver. 12. *I have declared and saved, and foretold, and not any strange god among you [that done so]; therefore, &c.* The argument of this whole discourse is so consistent in all its parts, that nothing heterogeneous is mixed with it. God is here introduced, as in the discourses immediately following, determined to vindicate the truth of his essence and divinity against idolaters and unbelievers, and to call them from error, superstition, and the worship of false deities, to the true faith, and to confirm believers in the same faith. Hence he commands the idolatrous and incredulous Jews, and all the nations, to be convoked, as it were, to a public disputation, and teaches his people the method of disputing with, and convicting them, from the great works already done, and hereafter to be done, as foretold only by him. But, as among those great works were the temporal deliverances which he had already wrought for his church according to the predictions of his prophets, and would hereafter perform by Cyrus, and the spiritual deliverance which he would procure for his people by the Messiah, the effect whereof would be the conversion of the Gentiles; he particularly appeals to these illustrious works of his providence, grace, and power, and evinces that they are to be ascribed only to him, as they were foretold only by him. See the analysis. This period treats, in my opinion, says Vitringa, concerning the deliverance of the people from the Assyrian, and stands here, by way of preface, to illustrate that other great deliverance of the church from the Chaldees. God is here represented, as shewing himself publicly in a great assembly

14 ¶ Thus saith the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships.

15 I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King.

16 Thus saith the LORD, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters;

17 Which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army, and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow.

18 ¶ Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old.

19 Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.

20 The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen.

21 This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.

22 ¶ But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.

23 Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt-offerings, neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense.

24 Thou hast bought me no sweet cans with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.

assembly of men, and vindicating to himself the glory taken from him by idolaters and unbelievers, which alone belongs to God, before whom all creatures must keep silence, and who alone, as the fountain of all perfection and honour, can be allowed to glory of himself.

Ver. 14, 15. Thus saith the Lord] In these verses the prophet foretels, and typically describes the benefit of deliverance from the Babylonish captivity, which God would perform for his people. The meaning is, "I have sent to Babylon the Medes and Persians, with Cyrus at their head, who shall besiege Babylon, and that with so great consternation of the citizens and soldiers, that all of them, prepared for flight, and among the rest the Chaldeans, who were esteemed the best soldiers, shall fly with all imaginable speed to the vessels and boats which they have prepared to convey the commodities and luxuries of the Babylonians up the river Euphrates, in order to escape the hands of the Medes and Persians." The latter part of the 14th verse is rendered by Vitringa, *And have made all their fugitives, even the Chaldeans, go down into their pleasure-boats.*

Ver. 16, 17. Thus saith the Lord] The prophet in these words confirms what he had advanced respecting the deliverance from Babylon, by the former deliverance which God had wrought for his people from Egypt; thus, from the view of the past, strengthening the faith and hope of believers in what was to come. Some, however, suppose that these words are a kind of preface to the following period, in which the new work of grace is foretold.

Ver. 18—21. Remember ye not, &c.] Call not to mind former things, &c. Another specimen is here produced of a mighty work of divine providence and grace, of a singular and wonderful benefit to be conferred upon the church, which is here described as greater and more excellent than the former ones. From which work foretold and effected,

the truth of the God of Israel is asserted against idolaters; and an argument is drawn for the support and establishment of the hope of believers. God says, that he will make a way in the desert, rivers in the wilderness; that he will cause the beasts of the field, the dragons and the ostriches, to honour him, for the advantage of his people. There can be no doubt that the prophet speaks here of the conversion of the Gentile world under the new oecumeny. The same metaphors and ideas have before occurred and been explained. See chap. xxxv. 1, 2, &c. Isaiah here embellishes the figure which he makes use of, with all the graces of variety. He describes the wild-beasts of the desert, and the dragons themselves, as having been parched with thirst, and praising God with their hisses and nocturnal howlings, for watering the sandy plains of Arabia. There is no image in which the eastern writers delight more than this; and he who has travelled himself into those parts, or read the travels of others, can be no stranger to the numerous concourse of wild beasts on the banks of rivers or other waters, and to their tremendous howlings in the night-time. See Michaelis and Vitringa.

Ver. 22—24. But thou hast not called upon me] This reproof may be connected in a two-fold manner with the preceding discourse. First, that the prophet, while he consoles the better part of the church, and confirms their faith by the predictions and promises of great things to come, may at the same time reprove the greater and worse part of the church, and give them to know that these benefits were not conferred upon the church for their sake, or that they should have any part in them; but that, on the contrary, they might be assured that they should incur the severest judgments of God. Or, secondly, the connection may be thus: that after the prophet had foretold and promised the singular blessings of deliverance from exile, and the privileges of the oecumeny of grace, to be exhibited.

25 I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.

26 Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.

27 Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me.

28 Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.

exhibited in their proper time, he yet informs the Jewish people that these benefits should proceed solely from the grace of God: that the worship which they had paid him by their sacrifices and offerings so abounded with defects, that it could not be esteemed true worship; nay, that Jehovah was determined not to pass by the grievous sins of the people and the priests unpunished. Therefore, whatever benefit should happen to the church, it was to be ascribed solely to his grace, not to their merits. This method of connecting the passage seems better to agree with the context; particularly the 27th verse. The *sweet cane* refers to that aromatic cane, probably the *cinnamon*, which was made use of for the incense. See Jer. vi. 20. Bishop Lowth reads the last clause of ver. 23. and ver. 24. *I have not burthened thee with exacting oblations; nor wearied thee with demands of frankincense: thou hast not purchased for me with silver the aromatic reed: neither hast thou satiated me with the fat of thy sacrifices. On the contrary, thou hast burthened me with thy sins, &c.*

Ver. 25—28. I, even I, am he that blotteth out] In the 25th verse the prophet declares, in words truly evangelical, that the divine grace alone, freely forgiving transgressions and sins, is the cause of the blessings and benefits predicted and promised. He then urges, ver. 26. the conviction begun, ver. 22. He offers to the Jews in the name of God, the condition of publicly disputing before just judges, and at the same time of choosing that side of the argument which they should judge most favourable to them. *Put me in remembrance of thy merits; let us plead together in judgment: do thou begin to plead, that thou mayest be justified: but when, unable to urge any thing, they were utterly silent, God himself brings his action against them, accuses them of revolt, and not them only, but their teachers, and the high-priest, the first of their teachers; for by thy first father in the 27th verse is meant the high-priest; particularly Urijah, who was high-priest in the time of Ahaz; (see 2 Kings, xvi. 10, 11.) the consequence of whose sins, he declares in the 28th verse, should be the severe sentence of the divine judgment, whereby they should be devoted as an accursed thing to destruction: Therefore I will profane the chiefs of the sanctuary, and give Jacob to Anathema, or the curse, &c.* See Jer. xxxii. 31, 32. and Vitringa.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The gracious prophecy contained in this chapter, in its primary sense probably respects the recovery of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon, but most eminently refers to the Gospel-days; when the church should, amidst all persecutions, rise great and glorious, and be increased with converts on every side.

1. God encourages them, from the most endearing views of his regard for them, and relation to them. *But now, thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, created thee anew in Christ Jesus, and he that formed thee, O Israel,*

the spiritual and therefore peculiar work of his hands, fear not under any trials or discouragements; for I have redeemed thee by the blood and infinite merit of Jesus; I have called thee by thy name, called thee with power, and written my own name upon thy heart: *thou art mine*, in the most precious bonds of divine love.

2. He assures them of his constant support under every trial. However threatening, violent, or severe their sufferings, his presence and power shall both strengthen, comfort, and deliver them, so that they should receive not the least hurt or damage. *Note*; If God be for us, and with us, then in the midst of dangers we are safe; and even in the jaws of death can triumph.

3. He mentions the former instances of his care as the earnest of his present salvation of them. He calls himself their God, their Saviour from every foe. As old he had destroyed Egypt for their sake, and done various other wondrous works, such should be still his regard towards them, that their enemies shall be all destroyed, because they were precious in his sight, through that Saviour in whom they were accepted, and honoured with the highest titles, the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, and as such beloved by him.

4. He promises a great increase of converts under the preaching of the Gospel. They need not fear, however diminished or brought low, for God is with them; and at his word, from the four quarters of the earth converts shall, as doves to their windows, flock into his church, being renewed by his Spirit, and fitted to shew forth his praise in all holy conversation and godliness. This may be applied particularly to the collecting of the Jews from their captivity, but seems more gloriously fulfilled in the conversion of the Gentiles by the preaching of the Gospel. *Note*; (1.) Every one called by Christ's name is bound to set forth his glory. (2.) The work of regeneration is God's own, wrought in the soul that believes in Christ; to GOD alone, therefore, must all the glory be given.

2dly, The worshippers of idols are called to appear and confront God's witnesses, if they dared maintain their wretched cause. God calls them the *blind that have eyes*, and the *deaf that have ears*, because, though they have the fashion of men, by such abominable idolatries they seem to have lost their reason and faculties. They cannot prove the divinity of their idols to justify their worship; they are the work of men's hands, and blinder and more impotent than their foolish votaries. But let God's witnesses appear, his Israel, and his servant, either the prophet Isaiah, or rather the Messiah, emphatically so called, chap. xlii. 1. with all the preachers of the Gospel and all true believers, to prove his unrivalled godhead and glory; he alone was from eternity; the sole existent, self-existent God and Saviour; and besides him, there neither is nor can be any other. In proof of which, two arguments are urged, drawn

## CHAP. XLIV.

*God comforteth the church with his promises. The vanity of idols, and folly of idol-makers: the prophet exhorteth to praise God for his redemption and omnipotency.*

[Before Christ 712.]

**Y**ET now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen:

drawn from his presence and his power. [1.] He hath declared things to come; his people's deliverance of old from Egypt, when as yet no strange God was among them, and now from Babylon, with numberless other things concerning the coming of the Messiah and his church; and surely none of the idols can pretend to such foreknowledge. [2.] He hath saved his people; from his hand, none can deliver; and when he works, none can let, whilst all the idols of the heathen are unprofitable and vain; unable in the least to assist or protect their worshippers. This they should observe to their conviction, and say, *it is truth*, acknowledging the folly of trusting to other gods, and giving the Lord alone the glory due unto his name.

3dly, Great was the deliverance from Egypt, great the recovery from Babylon, but greater far the recovery of lost souls by Jesus Christ, whose redemption is here spoken of.

1. For the encouragement of his believing people, God calls himself their Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, their Creator, their King. For though they seemed now cast off, their state dissolved, and their kingdom destroyed, yet God calleth the things that are not, as though they were, because he only speaks, and it is done.

2. He tells them what he intended to do for their sakes, which he speaks of as already accomplished; even to destroy the Babylonians, who fly in vain to their ships to escape; or, bound captives by the Medes and Persians, with bitter cries were transported far away.

3. He reminds them of what he had done for them, when, at the Red Sea, the chariots and horses of Pharaoh were utterly overthrown, and such would be the case of their present enemies; and as then he opened a path in the Red Sea for their passage, so would he, amidst all difficulties, bring them safe once more to their own land. *Note*; In our deepest affliction we should remember God's wonders of old time, and wait in faith for his salvation.

4. Yet greater things than these would he do for them: such miracles of grace as would obliterate, as it were, the remembrance of all that was past. *Behold, I will do a new thing*, which would astonish and surprise them, even the incarnation of Jesus Christ; *now it shall spring forth* as a branch in a short time; *shall ye not know it*, and thankfully receive this great Redeemer? In consequence of whose appearing, a wondrous change will be wrought in the world; the Gentile nations, before like a wilderness, impassable, uncultivated, and barren, shall be laid open for the Gospel, and become fruitful like a well-watered land. Men, whose tempers before were savage as the beasts, fierce as the dragons, and stupid as the owls, shall be re-

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2 Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, *which* will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen.

3 For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed and my blessing upon thine offspring:

newed and turned to the worship and service of the true God; and, in this once desolate world of heathenism, there shall be a plentiful effusion of Gospel-grace, like the waters of a river, and God will own the Gentile converts as his people, formed by his Spirit for his glory, and called to shew forth his praise. *Note*; (1.) Man does not naturally differ more from the beasts, than man does from man, when divine grace hath changed his heart. (2.) Wherever the Gospel comes, powerful and blessed are its effects: the wilderness then becomes a fruitful field. (3.) All that is good in the hearts of men, is God's own work in believing souls, and designed for his own glory. (4.) It must be our labour, study, and prayer, to correspond with the divine intentions, and to shew forth his praise who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.

4thly, The unworthiness of the sinner the more exalts and magnifies the glory and grace of the Saviour. We have,

1. A heavy charge brought against Israel. They had neglected prayer and the worship of God; yea, had counted his service wearisome, and wanted to be rid of it. Though dwelling in a land of plenty, they grudged the expence of God's temple, withheld their burnt-offerings and sacrifices, and prepared no sweet cane for the holy anointing oil and the sweet incense. Yet God had *not caused them to serve with an offering*, nor *wearied them with incense*, and did not exact from them difficult or burdensome services: the idolaters paid much greater honours and offered more expensive sacrifices to their false gods, than they were required to offer to the living Jehovah: whereas they not only neglected his worship, but openly violated his laws; till, weary with their iniquities, nothing seemed to await them but just and condign punishment.

2. A wondrous promise comes in. When we might have expected to hear, *I, even I*, am he that blotteth out their name from under heaven, God, in mercy transcendently glorious, declares, *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins*. *Note*; (1.) Forgiveness of sin is the great glory of the Gospel; of all sin; and the vilest need not despair. (2.) It is an act of free and unmerited grace in God to forgive sin; the least sin is in its nature deadly, and nothing we can do could ever save us from eternal ruin, unless his rich mercy interposed to pardon us.

3. God commands his people to put him in remembrance, and plead his promises with him, that they may be justified. But others understand this as a reproof to the self-righteous, challenging them to produce the good works on which they depend for justification; the vanity of which would be manifested, and they reduced to seek the free pardon offered, or perish in their pride.

4 Q

4. He

4 And they shall spring up *as* among the grass, as willows by the water-courses.

5 One shall say, I *am* the LORD's; and another shall call *himself* by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe *with* his hand unto the LORD, and surname *himself* by the name

of Israel.

6 Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the LORD of Hosts: I *am* the first, and I *am* the last, and besides me *there is* no God.

7 And who, as I, shall call, and shall de-

4. He reminds them that all their sufferings proceeded from their sins; to repent of which, his gracious promises were the greatest encouragement. *Thy first father hath sinned*, Adam, or their more immediate ancestors, or rather their high-priest, *and thy teachers have transgressed against me*; they who should have directed others, erred themselves, and led their brethren astray. In consequence of which, God had afflicted them, or would; for it seems spoken of their captivity in Babylon, or their last visitation by the Romans. *Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary*, the priests and Levites, *and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches*, under which they still lie, monuments of God's righteous judgments, till the Spirit shall be poured on them from on high; and at last they will return to him, from whom they have so greatly departed, and find that pardon and grace in Jesus which they have despised.

#### CHAP. XLIV.

*Ver. 1, 2. Yet now hear*] The prophet throughout this discourse alternately mixes reproofs and threats with consolations, because he had a two-fold subject before him; a church within a church; the true believers among the carnal Jews; each of them called by the name of *Jacob* and *Israel*. The church of the spiritual Israel is here addressed: which should remain among the Jews after God had executed the judgment just mentioned; that is to say, the people of God, who were to be brought back from exile, and to be preserved in Canaan, till God should fulfil the promises of grace which he had given to the seed of Abraham.

*Ver. 3—5. For I will pour water*] A general promise of help and protection appearing less efficacious, God promises something more great and sublime to his church: for when that church might appear to apprehend nothing but destruction amid so many calamities, the Almighty promises to it, both a remarkable *enlargement* of its body, that is, the mystical body of Christ, and also the spiritual blessings of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, to be poured forth abundantly upon the *enlarged* church. This promise is two-fold: In the third verse we have, *first*, the spiritual blessing to be imparted to the seed of the church; and *secondly*, the fruit of that blessing, in the wonderful increase of the church; which consists of two articles; the former of which describes this increase of the spiritual state of believers metaphorically, ver. 4. and the latter literally, without any figure, ver. 5. See on chap. xliii. 7. Every one must clearly discern the completion of this prophecy in the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and the wonderful effusion of the Spirit upon the first believers, with its reference particularly to that covenant in baptism, when the baptized in effect *subscribe with their hand unto the Lord*, and *surname themselves with the name of Christian*. But the prophecy probably in-

cludes also the great out-pouring of the Spirit in the latter days. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 6.]* Vitringa begins the third discourse of the fourth book of this prophecy at this verse, extends it to the 48th chapter, and divides it into four sections; the *first section*, continuing the thread of the preceding disputation and conviction, from the deliverance of the church to be procured by Cyrus, clearly foretold by Isaiah and subsequent prophets, describes the madness of idolatry, and ascribes this great work, as if it were now present, to God alone. Chap. xlv. 6—28. The *second*, after an apostrophe to Cyrus, pursues the same conviction, and largely sets forth the use and consequence of the blessing, namely, the calling and salvation of the Gentiles, chap. xlv. The *third* foretels the destruction of the Babylonish empire, and demonstrates the vanity of every other false religion, from the vanity of the Babylonish idolatry; chap. xlvi. and in the *fourth*, the prophet more largely foretels the fall of Babylon, and the catastrophe of the Babylonish empire: chap. xlvii. The first section is three-fold; the *first part* is redargutory, wherein the Jewish people, who had revolted from God by idolatry, are convinced, *first*, of the true divinity of the God of Israel, from the illustrious effects of his providence, clearly foretold by him, and proved by the event; verse 6—8. where we have a magnificent preface, containing the exordium of the reproof, ver. 6. and the reproof itself, ver. 7, 8. *Secondly*, they are convinced of the vanity and folly of idolatry and idolaters; ver. 9—20. The *second part* is exhortatory, encouraging the Jewish people to true repentance, as well from this conviction, as from the promises of grace, and the effects of those promises, ver. 21, 22. The *third part* is consolatory, wherein the deliverance of the people from the Babylonish captivity is described as if present, and as a wonderful effect of divine providence and grace; and particularly celebrated from its principal cause: wherein we have, *first*, the proposition, by way of apostrophe, to heaven, earth, and all the creatures, inciting them to praise God for this singular blessing to his people. *Secondly*, a declaration of this blessing with respect to its causes; GOD the principal one, ver. 24—27. Cyrus the instrumental, ver. 28.

*Thus saith the Lord*] You perceive that the discourse again departs from the immediately preceding subject, which is wholly evangelical, and that with a preface the prophet renews the conviction of idolaters, particularly the Jews, who were to be carried captive to Babylon, and for whose seed God would perform those promises which the prophet had just foretold. God would begin to fulfil those promises with the deliverance of the Jewish nation from Babylon: this should be the first sign of his reconciliation with his people. But the people could not partake of these benefits without a true conversion to God, and a renunciation of all idolatry and false religion. To which therefore



clare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them.

8 Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared *it*? ye *are* even my witnesses. Is there a God besides me? yea, *there is* no God; I know not *any*.

9 ¶ They that make a graven image *are* all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they *are* their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed.

10 Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image—*that* is profitable for nothing?

11 Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they *are* of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together.

12 The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms; yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint.

13 The carpenter stretcheth out *his* rule; he marketh it out with a line: he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house.

14 He heweth him down cedars, and taketh

the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish *it*.

15 Then shall it be for a man to burn; for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth *it*, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth *it*; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto.

16 He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth *himself*, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire:

17 And the residue thereof he maketh a god, *even* his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth *it*, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou *art* my god.

18 They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand.

19 And none considereth in his heart, neither *is there* knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten *it*: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?

20 He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, *Is there* not a lie in my right hand?

21 ¶ Remember these, O Jacob and Israel;

therefore, as to a condition absolutely necessary, the prophet here invites the people; and this is the foundation of the whole discourse. See Vitringa.

Ver. 7. *And who, as I, shall call, &c.*] The meaning is, “Who, of the strange gods, like me, by an efficacious command of his will, orders all causes and events of things to exist according to his good pleasure?” *Who sets it in order for me?* Who hath been of my counsel, to order and dispose these events? *From the time that I appointed, or chose the ancient people,* that is to say, “from the time that I called Abraham, to whom and his posterity I gave the tables of covenant.”

Ver. 8. *Fear ye not, &c.*] The meaning is, “Fear ye not, nor be terrified at the motions of the Medes and Persians rising up against the Babylonish empire, since those motions shall be for your advantage: For *have not* I clearly foretold that this should come to pass, *from the time* in which Isaiah and the subsequent prophets have

“prophefied among you? And are not their prophefies in your hands? So that I can here desire no other witnesses than yourselves.” Vitringa renders the next clause very properly, *Is there a god besides me? Is there a rock? I know not any.*

Ver. 9. *They that make a graven image*] *They that form the graven image are all of them vanity; and their most curious works shall not profit. Yea, their works themselves bear witness to them, that they see not and that they understand not:* ver. 10. *that every one may be ashamed, that he hath formed a god, &c.* Lowth. The prophet (still making God the speaker) passes to the other part of his reproof; wherein he sets forth at large the folly and madness of idolatry. His discourse may be divided into a proposition, ver. 9—11. and the enarration of that proposition, ver. 12—20. The whole is elegant, and easy to be understood. It should only be remembered, for the better comprehending its general meaning, that the prophet here refers particularly to the graven

for thou *art* my servant: I have formed thee; thou *art* my servant; O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.

22 I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.

23 Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done *it*: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.

24 Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I *am* the LORD that maketh all *things*; that stretch-

eth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;

25 That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise *men* backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish;

26 That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof:

27 That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers:

28 That saith of Cyrus, *He is* my shepherd,

graven images and idols of Babylon; and indeed the whole scene of the discourse should be placed in Babylon; as appears from the context, the 25th verse of this chapter, chap. xlv. 20. and xlvi. 1, &c. The 11th verse may be read, *Behold, all that apply, or adhere to it, shall be ashamed, &c.*

*Ver. 12. The smith with the tongs, &c.]* From this verse to the 20th the folly of idolatry is set forth in the most lively colours, and the whole scheme of idol worshippers exposed in an elegant strain of refined irony. There is no need of any exposition. The prophet here describes the instruments necessary for the carpenter to form the image. The 14th verse may be rendered, *He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the teil or the pine-tree, and the oak, which he reareth up for himself, &c. He planteth a pine, &c. ver. 18. They have not known, nor understood, because their eyes were so closed up, that, &c. ver. 19. Nor doth he at all reflect in mind; nor has he the consideration or the sense to say, &c. ver. 20. He feeds upon ashes; his deluded heart, &c.* The meaning of the phrase, *He feeds upon ashes*, is, "He depends on a thing which has no power to help him; barren, dry, and lifeless." Or possibly the expression may allude to the curse of the serpent, and be an oblique hint, that idolatry is the greatest degradation which the dignity of the human species can suffer: such a degradation as brings man to a level with the reptiles, the lowest and most abominable of brute creatures. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 21, 22. Remember these]* This whole exhortation, which is subjoined to the preceding reproof, is founded on this presumption, that, according to the prediction of Moses and the prophets, the Jewish and Israelitish nation, when carried into captivity, would turn themselves to God; namely, the faithful of that nation, the seed of the future church, after God had punished the contumacious transgressors of his law. These are the persons here addressed, and the address, together with the epithets here used, are also reasons urged by God to persuade them to the principal subject of this exhortation, subjoined to the 22d verse; *Return unto me.* The first argument for their conversion is taken from the preceding detection of the folly of idolatry: *Remember these*; the folly and madness of this idolatry and

superstition. The *second*, from their relation to, and covenant with God: *Thou, who art Jacob and Israel.* The *third*, from their calling to God's immediate service; *Thou art my servant.* The *fourth*, from God's formation of them to be his peculiar people; *I have formed thee.* We have a sentence in chap. xliii. 25. very similar to that in the 22d verse. There is great beauty in the metaphor made use of in this verse: For, as the sun arising disperses the clouds, so God, arising for the salvation of his believing people, with the light of his grace causes their sins to disappear, as the thickest clouds are dispersed before the rays of the sun. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 23. Sing, O ye heavens:]* The prophet here, by an elegant apostrophe, calls upon all creatures to glorify God for his singular blessing to his people, in delivering them from their captivity in Babylon; which also has a further respect to the great and spiritual deliverance of mankind by the Messiah.

*Ver. 24—27. Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, &c.]* The prophet here continues the discourse of God, after having called upon the whole creation, in the preceding verse, to praise him for the blessing of that great redemption from Babylon, concerning which he treats in these verses; and therefore he prefixes to this period a new and solemn preface, *Thus saith the Lord, &c.* The false prophets and diviners, mentioned in ver. 25. are those astrologers, with whom Chaldea particularly abounded; though, in a secondary sense, and, referring to the Gospel, the wise men of this world, of whom the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. i. 20. may be meant. *The word of his servant and messengers,* ver. 26. means, the word of Isaiah particularly, and the subsequent prophets who declared this great event. In the 27th verse there is an historical and a mystical sense; the historical refers to the drying up of the Euphrates by Cyrus; (see ch. xiv. 22, 23.) in a mystical sense, by *the deep, and rivers of Babylon*, are to be understood the great wealth and affluence wherewith that kingdom abounded. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 28. That saith of Cyrus]* Here at length the prophet clearly discovers the grand scope of his discourse. He speaks of Cyrus by name, as foreknown and decreed by the

and shall perform all my pleasure: even and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; laid.

the divine counsel, for the performance of the great work designed by Providence, at least 170 years before the event. This is one of the most remarkable prophecies in Scripture; of the same kind with that 1 Kings, xiii. 1, 2. He is called *God's shepherd*, as he was to be the instrument of gathering God's people together, and leading them home as a shepherd does his flock. Xenophon tells us, that Cyrus used to compare kings in general, and himself in particular, to a shepherd. See *Cyropæd.* lib. 8.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Amid the threatened judgments which closed the former chapter, a multitude of faithful souls remain to God, to whom he addresses himself for their comfort and encouragement.

1. Their character and relation to him are mentioned. They bear the honourable title of *his servants*, whom he will protect; they are *his chosen*, whom with peculiar regard he watches over; they are called ישרון *Jesurun, upright*, such being their temper; or *seeing ones*, to whom the glory of God in the Gospel of his Son hath been manifested; they are God's *creation*, his spiritual people, whom he will help, and therefore, whatever troubles fall on others, they need not fear. Happy are the people that are in such a case, so near and dear to the blessed God.

2. God promises to do great things for them. *I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground*; the soul that, under a sense of sin, as the parched ground, thirsts for pardon, grace, and consolation, shall be replenished abundantly out of God's fulness. *I will pour my Spirit, that best of gifts, upon thy seed*, the spiritual seed of Christ, and *my blessing upon thine offspring*; the blessed effect of which will be, *that they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses*; numerous, flourishing, and increasing in all the gifts of grace, and fruits of holiness. *Note*; The soul is then truly happy, when watered by the divine Spirit, it daily grows in grace, and in the knowledge and love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. They shall make open and public profession of their adherence to the Lord Christ; and not only the Jews, but the Gentiles, called to the knowledge of the Gospel, shall rank themselves among the Israel of God, join in communion and worship with them, and become one fold under one shepherd. *Note*; (1.) It is the duty and delight of every true believer to surrender up himself into the arms of Jesus; and he is then happy when he can say, *I am the Lord's, my beloved is mine, and I am his.* (2.) An Israelite indeed is a greater name, and more to be envied, than that of the highest monarchs of the earth.

2dly, Never was controversy so unequal as that recorded in this chapter between the living Jehovah and dead idols.

1. God displays his own greatness and glory, eternal and omniscient; let his Israel hear and believe. He is their King, their Redeemer, and in that peculiar relation to them demands their love and fidelity. He is also the Lord of Hosts, the universal Sovereign, the first and the last, from eternity to eternity; and besides him, there is no God. No other can foresee and declare, as he hath done,

the events of futurity, or give an exact account of his works from the days of old, since he appointed the ancient people, the first inhabitants of the earth: even of the nearest occurrences which should happen; the idol gods could not inform them, therefore they neither need fear them, nor ought to serve them, but be witnesses for God and his truth; besides whom, there is no other that can at all pretend to claim their notice, or deserve their worship.

2. He exposes the folly and stupidity of idolaters, as a warning to his people not to follow their abominable ways, and especially to guard them in Babylon, the city of idols, from joining in that worship so hateful to him, and so absurd in itself. The makers of the idols are all vanity, prove themselves empty and foolish; they call their idols *delectable things*, but they are unprofitable and vain; can neither know nor see the wants of their votaries, who seem equally blind in paying worship to the senseless stock, and witness to their own folly, for how wretched must be thy god, of which man himself is the maker, and well may they be ashamed of the work! The description of it alone is sufficient to expose both the maker and the idol to ridicule. The smith labours at the forge to prepare the iron-work, and the carpenter with his tools fashions and planes the tree into shape and form; and, when made, fastens it in its place. He gets a log of durable wood, or an ash of his own planting; and whilst one part of the loppings are employed to the uses of his kitchen, to dress his victuals, or warm him, the residue is made a god, and, with senseless stupidity he falls down to worship it; never reflecting on the ignoble use to which the remainder of the tree was applied, and that his own folly only made the difference between the log he worshipped, and the coals on his hearth; and all proceeds from the darkness of a deceived heart; the Devil, the god of this world, having blinded the eyes of idolaters; that they cannot see the lie that is in their right hand. *Note*; (1.) When once the human heart is abandoned to itself, there is nothing so brutish and absurd that it may not be brought to do. (2.) The pains that idolaters take to honour and worship their idols, is a just reproof of those who are negligent in the worship of the living and true God. (3.) They who place their affections on worldly things, are in fact idolaters; and will find, to their everlasting disappointment, a lie in their right hand. (4.) The serious consideration of the evil of our ways, is the first step towards our recovery.

3dly, God, having exposed the folly of idolatry, addresses himself to his own people.

1. He bids them remember these things; and in the land whither they were about to be carried captive, beware of these abominations to which they would be tempted; and to which also, to their shame, in time past, they had been so prone. *Note*; It becomes us to remember our own evil ways, that we may loath and abhor ourselves for them.

2. He gives them the most endearing promises, claiming them as his own, and assuring them of his kind and constant

## CHAP. XLV.

*God calleth Cyrus for his church's sake: by his omnipotence he challengeth obedience: he convinceth the idols of vanity by his saving power.*

[Before Christ 712.]

**T**HUS saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the

two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut;

2 I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron:

3 And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which

remembrances; and, as that was among the most eminent of all mercies, he particularly promises them the pardon of all their great and numerous transgressions, to blot them out as a cloud, and as a thick cloud to disperse them. *Note;* (1.) Our sins, like the dark cloud, intercept the beams of God's favour, and expose us to the storm of divine wrath. (2.) When God speaks the pardoning word, the clouds pass away, and the Sun of righteousness arises with healing in his wings. (3.) It is matter of transporting joy to the soul when this blessed change is effected, and when in Jesus we, who were in darkness and the shadow of death, behold the light of life.

3. He exhorts them in the view of these great and precious promises to return unto him without delay. They had greatly departed from him, and deserved his wrath and indignation; but he again shews himself as their Redeemer, and therefore invites them to the arms of his mercy. *Note;* (1.) The promise of pardoning grace is the great argument and inducement for the miserable sinner to return to God. (2.) Whenever he does he will find redemption prepared for him and applied to his soul, both from the guilt and power of sin, and, if faithful, from the inbeing of sin, and from death and hell, and all their consequences.

4. A triumphant song is put in the mouth of the faithful redeemed, not merely of the Jews delivered from Babylon, but of all the Israel of God, who, through Jesus Christ, have obtained victory over the powers of sin and Satan. The joy is great; the heavens are called upon to join in the song, and angels on their golden harps to speak the wonders of redeeming love; whilst earth, with all its inhabitants, from every forest and mountain echoes back the grateful sound of thanksgiving to the God of their mercies. *Note;* (1.) Praise is the bounden tribute due from every redeemed soul. (2.) There is joy in heaven over every soul recovered by divine grace from the bondage of corruption.

5. The Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, encourages them to trust in his promises, which, as the Almighty Creator and Governor of all, he was fully able to accomplish; particularly he engages to confound the wise men and diviners of Babylon, who saw for it lying visions of peace, and would be mad with vexation when the event corresponded so little with their prophecies, while his own word should receive the fullest accomplishment in the deliverance of his people. The cities of Zion would shortly be desolate indeed, without inhabitants; but their desolations should not continue, God will restore her decayed palaces, and rear again the temple from its ruins: Cyrus by name is appointed as his shepherd, the great instrument which the Lord meant to

employ; first, to destroy Babylon, the oppressor of his people, which Cyrus did by turning the course of the river which ran through the place, and thereby entered the city; and then to proclaim deliverance to the captive Jews, and restore their civil and ecclesiastical polity; giving them leave to rebuild their city and temple, and fixing them again in their own land. *Note;* (1.) When God hath designs to fulfil, he cannot want the means; difficulties before him are nothing; the mountain becomes a plain, the river dry. (2.) The character of a good king is, to be God's shepherd, to protect and provide for his people, and be a nursing father to his church. (3.) Whatever the greatest conquerors propose to themselves, they are raised up purely to fulfil God's pleasure, and perform his purposes.

## CHAP. XLV.

SEE the analyses on ch. xlv. 6. The second section of this discourse is divided into two parts: The *first part* respects the overthrow of the Babylonish empire, and the deliverance of the people of God from captivity, to be effected by Cyrus: Wherein we have, *first*, an apostrophe to this prince: and here the purpose of God, concerning him, and his success in subverting the Babylonish monarchy, is foretold; and the ends and design of this divine purpose are declared, ver. 4—7. An *epiphonema*, or exultation of the prophetic chorus, or of God himself, is subjoined; wherein the joyful consequences of this great work are figuratively described, ver. 8. and the malignant censurers of the ways of God are refuted. *Secondly*, we have a direct prophetic and doctrinal discourse of God, wherein, vindicating his honour against the blasphemers of his providence, he ascribes the raising up of Cyrus to himself, as the principal cause, ver. 11—13. and applies the joyful consequence hereof to the consolation of the pious, ver. 14. Another *epiphonema* of the chorus is subjoined, celebrating the ways of the divine providence, and their own lot, ver. 15—17. *Thirdly*, we have a reproving discourse of God to the Gentiles; wherein, from this work, and his prediction of it, he vindicates the truth of his divinity, and shews the vanity of idols and their worshippers, ver. 18—21. The *second part* of this section respects the calling of the Gentiles to the communion and salvation of God; and herein; *first*, we have a gracious invitation of the Gentiles to this communion, ver. 22. and *secondly*, the design of God concerning their conversion, faith, and salvation, emphatically set forth, ver. 23—25. The disposition of the parts of this prophecy is dramatic; for there are various persons who are here introduced: God himself, the ruler of the universe; Cyrus, to whom

call *thee* by thy name, *am* the God of Israel.

4 For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name : I have furnished thee, though thou hast not known me.

5 ¶ *I am* the LORD, and *there is* none else, *there is* no God besides me : I girded thee, though thou hast not known me :

6 That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that *there is* none besides me. *I am* the LORD, and *there is* none

else.

7 I form the light, and create darkness ; I make peace, and create evil. I the LORD do all these *things*.

8 Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness : let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together ; I the LORD have created it.

9 Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker ! *Let* the potsherd *strive* with the pot-

whom the discourse of God is directed ; and also all nations, which in like manner are addressed by an apostrophe, together with a chorus, representing the church, and addressing God. See Vitringa.

Ver. 1—3. *Thus saith the Lord*] See ch. xli. 2, 3. Cyrus is called *the Lord's anointed* ; that is to say, appointed by the divine counsel to perform God's good pleasure, and furnished for that purpose by the divine providence with the necessary endowments. *Whose right hand I have holden*, should rather be rendered, *Whose right hand I have taken hold of*. See ch. xli. 6. *To loose the loins of kings*, signifies, to render them weak and infirm, unprepared and unable to oppose Cyrus. Comp. ch. v. 27, &c. *To open before him the two-leaved gates*, &c. signifies, that the most strongly-fortified cities, most closely shut and guarded, such as were Babylon and Sardis, should be compelled to open their gates to this conqueror, aided by God. In the next clause there is a manifest allusion to the gates of Babylon, for Nebuchadnezzar made 25 gates of solid brass to every side of the great wall which encompassed Babylon ; the whole number of the brazen gates being 100. In the third verse it is promised, that Cyrus should find much hidden spoil and great treasures among the conquered nations ; and accordingly we learn from history, that the riches which he gained in his conquests amounted to a prodigious value : Nor can we wonder at it ; for those parts of Asia, at that time, abounded in wealth and luxury. Babylon had been heaping up treasures for many years ; and the riches of Cræsus, king of Lybia, whom Cyrus conquered and took prisoner, are in a manner become proverbial. The rapidity and wonderful success of Cyrus were such, that heathen historians have particularly remarked the interposition of the Deity in his cause : " O son of Cambyfes, the gods certainly respect thee, or thou couldst not have arrived at such good fortune," says Harpagus to him in Herodotus, lib. i. c. 124. See Bishop Newton, vol. i. and Vitringa.

Ver. 4—7. *For Jacob my servant's sake*] The prophet here gives us the reasons why God shewed such favour to a prince addicted to the Pagan superstition of his country, and ignorant of the true God ; that he prospered all his undertakings, and gave success to all his enterprises. These causes were *particular* and *general* : the one respecting the Jewish nation, ver. 4, 5. the other respecting all nations, and Cyrus himself, ver. 6, 7. The

principal cause of this whole event is subjoined to either passage, namely, the God of Israel, and he alone : For it is the design of this whole discourse, to convince all nations of the true divinity of Jehovah, and to draw them from the superstitious worship of false gods. Bishop Warburton observes, ingeniously at least, and Vitringa also makes nearly the same remark, that the words of the 7th verse, being directed to Cyrus, king of Persia, may be understood as spoken to the Persian sect of the *Magians*, who held light and darkness, good and evil, to be the supreme beings, without acknowledging the great God of heaven and earth, who is infinitely superior to them both. In opposition to this opinion, the prophet instructs Cyrus, that light and darkness, or good and evil, are under the direction and disposal of Almighty God ; hereby guarding the Israelites from the doctrine of the two principles which were held by the Persians, and shewing that it was founded upon absurdity. See Div. Leg. vol. 4. and Vitringa.

Ver. 8. *Drop down, ye heavens, from above*] *Drop down, &c. and let the clouds pour down righteousness : let the earth open, and all kinds of salvation flourish ; and let righteousness shoot forth together, &c.* Vitringa is of opinion, that this strongly-figurative passage refers primarily to the blessing consequent upon the deliverance from the Babylonish captivity ; but secondarily, and in its more complete sense, to that righteousness and salvation liberally imparted to man by the grace of the Messiah. The sense of the metaphor may be resolved into these positions. That God is willing, *first*, with the deliverance of the people to be effected by Cyrus, or after that deliverance and the time of Cyrus, that there should be a nearer alliance between heaven and earth than there had been before : *secondly*, that *righteousness*, as a celestial gift, should be sent down from heaven to earth, liberally and gently, and should widely diffuse itself among men. *Thirdly*, that the minds of men should be disposed to receive that righteousness ; and that, *fourthly*, the faithful, together with righteousness, should be made partakers of the full salvation which God had prepared for the world ; and *fifthly*, that all causes, celestial and terrestrial, should concur to produce this effect of the divine providence and grace. The prophet's ideas are taken from the spring, when, the rains descending, the earth opens to receive them, and is thereby rendered fruitful.

Ver. 9, 10. *Woe unto him that striveth*] *Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker ; the potsherd with the potter : Shall*

shepherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?

10 Woe unto him that saith unto *his* father, What begetteth thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?

11 Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.

12 I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, *even* my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.

13 I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of

Hosts.

14 Thus saith the LORD, The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, *saying*, Surely God is in thee; and *there is none else, there is no God.*

15 Verily, thou *art* a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.

16 They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together *that are* makers of idols.

17 *But* Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.

*Shall the clay, &c.?* The greater number of interpreters are of opinion, that this reproof refers to the impious and malevolent censurers of God among the Jewish people, who, dissatisfied with their present state of banishment, found fault with the ways of God towards their nation, and at the same time contemned the promises of deliverance given by the prophets, as not probable, or likely to take effect. In this view the passage is sufficiently clear. See Rom. ix. 20, 21.

Ver. 11—13. *Thus saith the Lord.] Thus, &c.—They ask me of things to come: Would ye then give me commands concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands? As much as to say, “You, hypocrites, inquire into the future fate of the church, and ask and consult my prophets concerning it: Would you therefore give me commands, and that concerning my sons, and the work of my hands? For if you suppose—which you do, by inquiring of my prophets—that I know future things, you ought also thence to collect, that I am the true God, the ruler of the universe, and of my people; and who, it is reasonable to suppose, am endowed with the highest wisdom: So that you foolishly cavil against my designs, as if you could mend them; the designs of my providence towards my sons, and the work of my own hands: Sons whom, as a father, I cannot neglect.”* The reader must observe, that this verse is in immediate opposition to the reproof in the preceding ones. The Almighty adds, *I have made the earth, &c.* “Can I therefore want power or wisdom to raise up a deliverer of my people, and Cyrus in particular?” for it is evident that he is spoken of in the 13th verse. See chap. xli. 2. Cyrus not only dismissed the Jewish captives without *price* or *reward*, but bestowed very liberal presents upon them, and exhorted his subjects to the same liberality. See the first chapter of Ezra.

Ver. 14. *Thus saith the Lord, &c.]* This illustrious prophecy contains an apostrophe to Jerusalem, or to the com-

pany of returning exiles, and without all doubt relates some joyful consequence of the deliverance foretold; which consequence immediately respects religion; and the meaning of the sentence is, that it should come to pass, that in time, after the return from Babylon, profelytes of various nations, and among these particularly Egyptians, Ethiopians, and Sabeans, should be joined to the Jewish church, and be *convinced* by the reasons demonstrating the truth of the Jewish religion. They should come, suppliant and adoring God, to Jerusalem, and, confessing their faith, humbly entreat to be admitted into the communion of that church. Which accession of profelytes from these and other nations should be fulfilled under the oeconomy of Gospel grace, when not only individuals, but whole nations, *chained and bound*, that is, *bound in the spirit* (Acts, xx. 22.), should submissively receive the doctrine of this holy religion. The prophet, in chap. xiv. 1, 2. speaks of the profelytes to religion in terms which fully explain the phrase, *In chains they shall come over.* See 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. and Vitringa.

Ver. 15—17. *Verily, thou art a God.]* The church or chorus of believers which are here introduced cry out, and interrupt, as it were, the divine discourse with exultation; which may be divided into three articles. The *first* explains the nature of God, with respect to his ways, and the order of his counsels and providence;—in this verse. See chap. lv. 8, 9. The ways and judgments of God are a great deep; and therefore not to be judged of too presumptuously by the narrow human intellect. The *second article* contains an apostrophe to idolaters, convicting them of their folly from this wonderful nature and these wonderful doings of God: It should be rendered, *They are ashamed, &c. The makers of idols walk in ignominy together:* that is, after the completion of this great prophecy. The *third article* sets forth the privilege and hope of the church, *But Israel is saved by Jehovah with an everlasting salvation;* not only that procured by Cyrus, but that procured by a much greater

18 For thus saith the LORD, that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and *there is none else.*

19 I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.

20 ¶ Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye *that are* escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god *that* cannot save.

21 Tell ye, and bring *them* near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? *who* hath told it from that time? *have* not I the LORD? and *there is* no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; *there is* none beside me.

22 ¶ Look unto me, and be ye saved all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and *there is* none else.

23 I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth *in* righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.

24 Surely, shall *one* say, in the LORD, have

greater than he; Jesus, the Jehovah, and true Saviour of his faithful people.

*Ver. 18—21. For thus saith the Lord*] The Almighty here renews his discourse to the profelytes of the nations, to confirm them in their belief of the true religion, and to eradicate all the prejudices of idolatry from their minds. A preface suitable to the scope of the discourse is prefixed, consisting of two articles; the *first*, in this verse, claiming to God the glory of creating this earth with a wise and gracious design: The *second*, in ver. 19. wherein God, *first*, opposes his predictions, and the manner of them, to the manner in which the ministers and prophets of the false gods delivered their prophecies, *I have not spoken in secret*, &c. *Secondly*, declares that they who sought him, should not do so in vain; and *thirdly*, that his promises were righteous and true; and should never fail those who confided in them: After which, we have in the 20th and 21st verses, the conviction of the profelytes; those who are escaped of the nations; where the truth of God and the vanity of idols are set forth, from the mighty work which God had done for the deliverance of his church, and from his prediction of that work. We may read the second clause of ver. 19. *I said not to the seed of Jacob, in vain, seek me.* The beginning of the 21st verse would be more clearly rendered thus, *Come forth, and produce your arguments; nay, let them take counsel together*, &c. See ch. xli. 21. and Vitringa.

*Ver. 22. Look unto me, and be ye saved*] The profelytes of the nations were invited to embrace the faith of the true God; but that seemed too narrow and confined; for what forbids all nations without distinction, delivered from the error of idolatry, to believe in the true God, and to worship him alone? Therefore the SON OF GOD here discovers himself, opening all the riches of his grace, and inviting all nations without distinction to his communion: Exhorting *all the ends of the earth* to receive justification procured by him for the human race, and therewith eternal salvation. The apostle, Rom. xiv. 11. has instructed us to apply these words to God the Son: they are wholly evangelical. *To look*, is the act of a sinner, fully persuaded no less of his own misery than of the divine grace; whereby God has determined to save sinners through his Son, turn-

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ing themselves in faith and hope to God in Christ, and humbly suing for pardon and salvation from him. See Acts, iv. 12. chap. xvii. 7. lii. 10. and Vitringa.

*Ver. 23. I have sworn by myself; I have sworn by myself; the word of truth is gone out of my mouth, a word which shall not return,—That, &c.* These are the words of the Son of God, declaring the purpose of grace, to illuminate all nations without distinction with the light of the Gospel, and to bring them to the true religion who worship the Father by the Son, the Mediator and Saviour, whom he hath appointed the Lord and Judge of the whole world. See Rom. xiv. 11. Philip. ii. 10, 11. where St. Paul explains the phrase, *Every tongue shall swear, by every tongue shall confess to God.* *To swear* by the name of Christ is to *confess* his name, to profess his faith, and acknowledge his divinity.

*Ver. 24, 25. Surely, shall one say, &c.*] The discourse of the Son of God is here continued. He declares more fully the sum of the oath mentioned in the preceding verse; that is, he explains the purpose of grace concerning the manner, the means, and the cause of that salvation which was to be offered to all nations. By *strength* may be here meant that grace or redemption founded upon the justification obtained for man through Christ. Respecting the latter clause of ver. 24. see chap. i. 11. and compare 1 Cor. i. 31. Jer. ix. 23, 24.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Cyrus was the type of the great Redeemer, and, in his deliverance of the captive Jews, prefigured the greater redemption which Jesus should obtain for believers of all nations: more than two hundred years before the event came to pass, we have him particularly named and pointed out, and his great conquests described, which, through the mighty hand of God upon him, he was enabled to obtain over kingdoms which seemed much more powerful than his own, and which opened a way at last to him, in conjunction with the Persians, for the conquest of Babylon. We have here,

1. The conquests that he should obtain: Nations are subdued before him, and kings submit to his yoke; the strongest cities cannot resist his arms, nor the most difficult passes stop his march; God goes before him,

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and

I righteousness and strength: *even* to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.

25 In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.

and therefore resistance is vain. The treasures of his enemies become his spoil, and among them, those of Croesus, king of Lydia, the richest monarch of that age: and by these he was enabled to pursue his victories to the final overthrow of the Babylonish monarchy.

2. God's grand design in this was to serve his Israel. Cyrus himself was a stranger to the true God, or had very obscure ideas concerning him, and meant his own grandeur and glory alone, or principally at least; but it was for Jacob's sake that God had raised him up, and ordained him to be such a conqueror, in order that he might be their deliverer. *Note*; (1.) In all God's providences, in the revolutions of states and kingdoms, there is wheel within wheel; and God hath purposes to answer for the good of his faithful people, which the great agents employed in these things little think of. (2.) Christ is exalted to the throne for the sake of the faithful, hath all power given him, and all the unsearchable riches of grace to bestow; therefore they may expect at his hands every mercy and blessing they can need.

2dly. The design of God in raising up Cyrus, was to make his own power and glory to appear: therefore,

1. He asserts his own Godhead, and besides him there is no other: his works declare his universal dominion; light and darkness, good and evil, not the evil of sin, but of suffering, are all from him: and if Cyrus was so wonderfully strengthened for his conquests, the world must take notice to whom he stands indebted; though he probably knew but little, if any thing, of the hand that supported him, in this prophetic word it evidently appears the work was of God. *Note*; Since prosperity and adversity both come from God, in both he is to be acknowledged, and our duty is to correspond with his designs.

2. A glorious prophecy is revealed, of the abundance of blessings which, by the incarnation of the Redeemer, should descend on the Israel of God. *Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness*, or, as some would render it, *the righteous One*, the Lord Jesus, who, descending from above, as the rain waters the earth, would cause the souls of men to bring forth the blessed fruits of grace and holiness: *let the earth open*; the barren hearts of men, that are dead like earth, till enlivened by the precious influences of the Spirit of Jesus; *and let them bring forth salvation, or the Saviour, and let righteousness spring up together*, even that righteousness, holiness and complete salvation which are the issue of his work of grace in the faithful soul. *If the Lord have created it*, the work is wholly Divine in the contrivance and execution of it, and our righteousness and salvation are derived from him alone.

3. A woe is pronounced on the rebellious; either the enemies of God, who opposed his people's deliverance, or the faithless Jews who despaired of it. Poor worms of dust, as potsherds of the earth, may strive with each other; but to contend with God, or find fault with him, is as

absurd as for the clay to pretend greater wisdom than the potter, and unnatural as for the child to quarrel with his parents for having begotten and brought him forth. God's sovereignty, wisdom, justice and goodness, in all his works and ways, are incontestable, and it is as wicked as foolish to find fault with or oppose them. *Note*; (1.) They who quarrel with God and his providences, only aggravate their own sufferings. (2.) Nothing can be a greater argument for entire resignation to the Divine will, than the consideration, what God is, and what we are; and we then act as becomes creatures, when, as clay in the hands of the potter, we are content to be just what our Maker pleases.

3dly, We have,

1. In ver. 11. the encouragement that God gives to his people to wait upon him in prayer, and to enquire concerning the great events which he had foretold; either the restoration of his people from their captivity, or the glorious increase of the sons of God, who would be raised up by the preaching of the Gospel. Or the words may be read interrogatively, in correspondence with the former verse, as implying a reproof to those who questioned the fitness of his dispensations.

2. God displays his own glorious power in the creation of all things, as a ground to engage his people's confidence, and particularly mentions their deliverance by Cyrus; it is spoken of as already done, because determined in the Divine mind. God had raised him up in righteousness, and directed all his ways, and he should without price discharge them, and with his favour assist them to rebuild Jerusalem. This also may refer to the greater than Cyrus, that Messiah whom God would raise up in righteousness, not for one nation only, but for all people, whose way he directed to the full accomplishment of this great work; and who, having by his own arm wrought out redemption for all the faithful, discharges them from all the arrests of sin, and from the bondage of corruption, without money and without price.

3. He promises that a great increase should be made to them. Many of the neighbouring nations, probably on their return, became converts to their religion: or rather this refers to Gospel times, when, by the word of truth, the Gentiles, Egyptians, Ethiopians, and Sabaeans, gladly received Christ's gentle yoke, and yielded themselves up to God in the Gospel of his dear Son.

4. Though sometimes in their afflictions he appeared to hide himself, yet he was still *the God of Israel, the Saviour*, ready in due time to appear for the help and consolation of his believing people. *Note*; God is not the less tender of us, or farther from our help, when he corrects us: if he chasten us, it is to engage us more earnestly to seek him.

5. The idolaters should be confounded and ashamed, as the Babylonians were, when their gods, as well as themselves, went into captivity; and as was more abundantly seen, when the Gospel triumphed over the powers of darkness, and idolatry was generally abolished.

6. God promises his Israel, his faithful people, an everlasting



## C H A P. XLVI.

*The idols of Babylon could not save themselves. God saveth his faithful people to the end. Idols are not comparable to God for power, or present salvation.*

[Before Christ 712.]

**B**E L boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the

cattle: your carriages *were* heavy laden; *they* are a burden to the weary *beast*.

2 They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity.

3 ¶ Harken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which

lasting salvation. *Israel shall be saved* IN, or BY the Lord; the work is his, and shall be surely accomplished for the faithful; not merely from Babylon, and the yoke of their captivity, but *with an everlasting salvation* through the Lord Jesus: *ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end, or unto the ages of eternity*; so permanent is that salvation which Christ by his blood and infinite merit hath purchased, and will bestow on every persevering believer.

7. God gives his Israel the strongest assurances of his love. He who made the heavens with such admirable wisdom, and fashioned the earth so fearfully and wonderfully, the only true God and Creator, he speaks the glorious promise, not with a muttering low voice in secret, as the oracles of the heathens were delivered, but openly and publicly: and no true believer ever did, or shall seek his face in vain; he will ever hear and answer such; and his word of righteousness is a full ground for their trust and confidence, *Note*; (1.) The word of promise is the great argument for the prayer of faith. (2.) If none seek God's face in vain, how inexcusable are they who reject their own mercies, and restrain prayer before God. (3.) Whatever God says or does is altogether righteous and true, and the faithful soul ever acquiesces therein.

4thly, The folly of idolaters had before been declared. Now,

1. God calls his people, the converts from heathenism, to see the vanity of those who persisted in the abominable worship of idols, and to remonstrate with them against it: *they pray unto a god that cannot save them*; though all the votaries of idols consult together, they cannot bring a proof of any one instance wherein their false gods shewed the least prescience of future events, for they are no gods; the living Jehovah alone claims this as his prerogative, and besides him there is no other; *a just God*, whose works and words are all righteousness and truth, *a Saviour*, able to the uttermost to bless and protect his true worshippers. *Note*; They who by Divine grace have themselves been converted to God, are especially called upon to shew zeal for his glory, in order to the conviction and conversion of others.

2. All nations are called upon to look to Jesus and be saved: by him the everlasting salvation promised is obtained, and through him alone to be received, for *there is none else*; becoming incarnate, and by an obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, lifted up as the serpent in the wilderness, every perishing sinner may look to him and live: *he is God*, and therefore he saves to the uttermost; the guilty, the weak, the tempted, the disconsolate, have all their fears silenced, and their countenances lightened by the bright beams of grace and mercy that flow from the crucified Jesus.

3. According to his solemn oath, the nations of the

faithful redeemed shall be saved by him, and his enemies bow before him. *I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness*, and shall, both respecting the promise and the prophecy, be assuredly fulfilled, and shall not return void, *that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear*; pay their allegiance, and join the worship of him their Redeemer, as will be seen in the day when the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ; and especially in the judgment day, to which the apostle refers this passage, Rom. xiv. 10, 11. *Surely, shall one say*, triumphing in their interest in the glorious Redeemer, *In the Lord, or only in the Lord, have I righteousness and strength*, renouncing themselves, and by faith laying hold of the all-sufficient grace of Jesus their Lord, to justify, sanctify, and save them: *even to him shall men come*, all that will believe; and *all that are incensed against him*, who are either careless transgressors of his law, or proudly reject his infinite merit and strength to trust on their own, they shall be ashamed at the vanity of their confidence, and the misery which their iniquities will bring upon them, while the humble believer will rejoice, for *in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel*, the living members of Christ's church, be justified from every accusation of sin, the law, and their own consciences, *and shall glory*, not in themselves, but in the Lord their righteousness; at whose feet their crown is laid, and to whose rich and unmerited grace the whole of their salvation is ascribed.

## C H A P. XLVI.

THE third section of this discourse, contained in the present chapter, is divided into two parts. In the *former*, or prophetic part, the overthrow of the Babylonish idolatry is foretold, ver. 1, 2. and in the *second* part, the sinners among the people are called to repentance, and convinced of the vanity of idols, and the true divinity of the God of Israel. And herein we have, *first*, a kind address to the faithful, assuring them of Jehovah's constant regard towards them. *Secondly*, The conviction itself drawn from the vanity of idols, and the manner of forming them, ver. 5—7. from the illustrious works of God in former times, ver. 8, 9. and from the predictions certainly fulfilled, or to be fulfilled by him; whereof this deliverance from captivity is produced as an instance; ver. 10, 11. *Thirdly*, the unbelievers are particularly refuted, who doubted the completion of these predictions and promises, ver. 12, 13.

*Ver. 1, 2. Bel bowed down*] The prophet, as he wrote this, saw the fall of Babylon before his eyes, the city plundered and spoiled, the temples ravaged and destroyed, and the idols of Babylon placed upon the beasts, and carried away into Media and Persia; and as he saw, so he has described;

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dwelling

are borne *by me* from the belly, which are carried from the womb :

4 And *even to your* old age I *am* he ; and *even to hoar hairs* will I carry *you* : I have made, and I will bear ; even I will carry, and will deliver *you*.

5 ¶ To whom will ye liken me, and make *me* equal, and compare me, that *we may be like* ?

6 They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith ; and he maketh it a god : they fall down, yea they worship.

7 They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth ; from his place shall he not remove : yea, *one* shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble.

8 Remember this, and shew yourselves men :

bring *it* again to mind, O ye transgressors.

9 Remember the former things of old, for I *am* God, and *there is none else* ; I *am* God, and *there is none like me*.

10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure :

11 Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country : yea, I have spoken *it*, I will also bring it to pass ; I have purposed *it*, I will also do it.

12 ¶ Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that *are* far from righteousness :

13 I bring near my righteousness ; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry : and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.

dwelling long and largely, as is common with the prophet, upon the same object ; viewing and exhibiting it to view on every side. We may just observe that the prophet, representing the subversion of the Babylonish state in this section, describes it with respect to religion ; that is, its shameful superstition. In the following section he sets forth the destruction of the civil state. *Bel* and *Nebo* were two principal idols of the Babylonians. See chap. xxi. 9. and Jer. l. and li.

*Ver. 3, 4. Hearken unto me*] The Almighty introduces the reproof that he was about to urge with a preface, in these words, assuring the exiles, in the strongest manner, of the singular and constant care of his providence towards them. The words are very strong and expressive, but the fourth verse will be better understood from the following version: *And even, &c.—will I support you : I have done, and I will bear you ; I will support and will deliver you.* But this whole passage certainly refers in its spiritual sense to the people of God of all ages.

*Ver. 5—7. To whom will ye liken me*] We have in these verses the conviction itself, exhibiting the vanity of idolatry. The argument is similar to that in chap. xl. 18, &c. and xlv. 12, &c. except that the discourse in chap. xl. is directed to the Gentiles, but here to the house of Jacob in captivity. The last clause of the sixth verse may be rendered, *They adore : yea, they fall prostrate before it.*

*Ver. 8, 9. Remember this*] *Remember this, and be inflamed with zeal, &c.* This is similar to chap. xlv. 21. See also Deut. xxx. 1. The prophet in the ninth verse proposes a new argument, whereby to prove the divinity of God ; namely, he wonderful works which he had done in former times, particularly in delivering his people from Egypt, and settling them in the land of Canaan.

*Ver. 10, 11. Declaring the end from the beginning*] *Declaring the event, &c.* Another argument for the divinity of the God of Israel is here urged, namely, his foreknow-

ledge and prediction of future events. The prophet subjoins, in the 11th verse, a particular instance of God's prescience. There can be no doubt that Cyrus is meant by the *ravenous bird, or eagle from the east*. Kings and princes are often compared in Scripture to *eagles*, Jer. xlvi. 40. Ezek. xvii. 3. But it has been thought that there is a peculiar propriety in this application to Cyrus, as the *eagle* well denotes the magnanimity, the quickness of judgment, the celerity in all his expeditions and motions, for which Cyrus was so remarkable. We are also told by Plutarch, that Cyrus had an *aquiline* nose, and Xenophon expressly relates that his standard was a golden eagle ; “ which still,” says he, “ continues to be the standard of the Persian kings.” See *Cyropæd.* book vii. not far from the beginning.

*Ver. 12, 13. Hearken unto me*] God had addressed those kindly, who had suffered themselves, through imprudence, to be seduced from the right way, and whose conversion might more reasonably be expected ; but he speaks more severely to the hypocrites, the incredulous, the *ferce and proud in heart*, who obstinately doubted the completion of his excellent promises : “ O you,” says he, “ who are “ yourselves far from faith, truth, integrity, and all propriety, full of deceit, hypocrisy, incredulity, hard and “ bold of heart, and who complain that *my salvation is “ far off*, and call my fidelity in question ; *hearken to me*, “ and know, that my *righteousness*, or justification, is not “ far off, but near at hand, and shortly to be revealed.” The 13th verse is to be explained from chap. xlv. 23. See ch. lxii. 3. and Hab. ii. 3.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Two things are here foretold :

1. The miserable estate to which Babylon and her idols would be reduced ; *Bel* and *Nebo*, the deities they worshipped, so far from being able to protect their votaries, would not be able to save themselves, but, among other spoil, be plucked from their pedestals, and laid as heavy burdens on

## C H A P. XLVII.

*God's judgment upon Babylon and Chaldea, for their unmercifulness, pride, and audaciousness, shall be irresistible.*

[Before Christ 712.]

**C**OME down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the

ground: *there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate.*

2 Take the millstones, and grind meal: uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers.

the weary beasts who carried them: Israel therefore must not fear or worship such wretched and impotent idols.

2. When Babylon's gods shall fail her, the Lord will eminently appear the protector of his people: great had been the care that he had shown them from their infant days, when first they began to grow into a nation, and never would he leave or forsake them in their old age, but bear them above their difficulties, carry them back to their own land, and deliver them from all their oppressors; and such is still his tender regard toward his faithful people. From the womb he took us, and preserved our natural life amid the perils of helpless infancy; but more, he took us from the womb of nature, that we might become children of grace, bore with our weakness and infirmities, and watched over us with more than maternal tenderness; nor will he ever fail the faithful, when the infirmities of old age creep upon them, and infantile weakness returns: his hoary-headed saints are precious in his sight, and he will bear them through all the storms of life, and land them safe on the blissful shores of immortality, where their youth will be renewed as the eagle.

2dly, Israel's besetting sin was idolatry, and many of them, it is to be feared, in Babylon would easily be brought to worship the gods of their conquerors: to them therefore Jehovah seems especially to address himself.

1. God shows them the folly of the most expensive idols: Though they lavished gold and silver out of the bag, it were vain to attempt representing the eternal Spirit, or equalling him who is above all. Their richest gods were motionless and senseless, must be carried to their places, and neither could hear nor grant the prayers of their petitioners. *Note*: To serve their idol lusts men grudge no expence; to serve the glorious God shall we then count any thing too much to bestow? These idolaters shall rise up in judgment against niggardly professors.

2. He calls upon them to remember and repent of these sinful works. *Show yourselves men*, for such service is brutish; or, *be ye strong* to oppose the torrent of idolatry; or, *be fired with zeal* against the dishonour hereby shown to God: *bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors*; remember your evil ways, and, as sinners, with shame return to God, who is the only true God; the evidence of which he hath given in all the prophecies, which from the beginning have been exactly accomplished according to his word, and which continue daily fulfilling, and shall all come to pass in their appointed time; for his counsel must stand, and he will do all his pleasure, particularly his design of delivering his people shall be accomplished by Cyrus, called a *ravenous*, or *swift-winged bird*, with impetuosity advancing against the Babylonians, to execute God's counsel in their destruction, which, as he hath purposed and foretold, he will perform, and prove therein his divine power and pre-

science. *Note*: (1.) It is good for us often to remember and reflect upon our ways, and we shall, in general, find much in them to bewail, repent of, and amend. (2.) As God in all his providences fulfils his own pleasure, it becomes us ever to rest satisfied in his dispensations, and to acknowledge that he doth all things well. (3.) God's people may comfort themselves in the confidence of the accomplishment of those prophecies which are yet unfulfilled, as surely as they have seen the former ones verified: Rome, with her idols, as Babylon, must fall, and God's kingdom be more eminently than ever yet exalted in the earth.

3. God addresses the stout-hearted Jews, that were far from righteousness, who continued unhumiliated under all their visitations, and distrusted God's faithfulness; or though they kept up an exterior of religion, and trusted that they were righteous, yet being ignorant of God's righteousness, and proud of their own, were so much the farther removed from the way of salvation. God saith, *I bring near my righteousness*; either his faithfulness in the fulfilment of his promises, or that glorious display of his righteousness, manifested in the Redeemer, his work and sufferings: *it shall not be far off*, but in the word of the Gospel brought near to every awakened sinner, to believe in and trust upon; *and my salvation shall not tarry*, it shall quickly be accomplished; the deliverance of the Jews from their captivity, and the greater deliverance which Jesus should work for every faithful soul; *and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory*; when they were restored to their own land; or more eminently when the Lord Jesus came to Zion, publishing the Gospel of the kingdom, and his believers received him, glorifying God for the gift of his Son, and eminently shewing forth his praise, both by their lips and in their lives. *Note*: (1.) Nothing is so fatal to unawakened souls as pride and conceit of their own righteousness. (2.) A free and full salvation is now offered to the perishing sinner. (3.) The stout-hearted, who reject Jesus as a Saviour, will find their stout hearts fail them, when they shall meet him as their judge. (4.) His faithful Israel is the Redeemer's glory; for this he hath formed us; let it be our constant care to approve ourselves to him, that he may be glorified in us and by us.

## C H A P. XLVII.

THE *first part* of the 4th section contains an apostrophe to Babylon, as the seat of a great empire; and herein *first* are foretold the abolition of that empire, and the degradation of its citizens to the lowest servitude, ver. 1. to middle of ver. 3. and the efficient cause hereof, namely, God, who shews himself, (latter end of ver. 3.) and is shewn by the church, here introduced as speaking, ver. 4. *Secondly*, we have the extreme and durable calamity of Babylon; ver. 5. and the impulsive causes of this calamity: *First*, their

3 Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man.

4 *As for* our Redeemer, the LORD of Hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel.

5 Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms.

6 I was wroth with my people, I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand: thou didst shew them no

mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke.

7 And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever: so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it.

8 Therefore hear now this, *thou that art* given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children:

their cruelty to the people of God, ver. 6. and *secondly*, their pride and presumption, ver. 7. *thirdly*, the same argument is continued: where, *first*, the third impulsive cause is premised, namely, their luxury, voluptuousness, security, arrogance, and carnal confidence in the stability of their state: ver. 8. *Secondly*, the calamity itself, widowhood, solitude, and that suddenly, and at once, notwithstanding the contrary prediction of their diviners, ver. 9. *Fourthly*, again, in the same manner, *first*, the fourth impulsive clause is premised, the oppression of the nations, and the carnal wisdom and confidence joined thereto, ver. 10. *secondly*, the calamity; namely, the destruction and sudden desolation determined by Jehovah, ver. 11. In the *second part*, Babylon is *first* commanded, by the strongest sarcasm, to bring forth, in this time of her calamity, her magicians, diviners, astrologers, that she may seek help or comfort from those in whom she trusted and gloried, ver. 12, 13. *secondly*, the vanity, impotence, and unhappy end of all those who exercise these arts, or seek protection in them, are set forth, ver. 14, 15.

*Ver. 1—3. Come down, and sit in the dust, &c.]* The prophet here commands Babylon to assume the habit and forms of the most abject state, most opposite to that state of honour and glory in which she had long flourished. She is addressed as a *virgin*, according to the usual modes of speaking, when cities or states are personified; though some say that she is called *the virgin daughter of Babylon*, because, according to Herodotus, she had never been conquered before. *Take the mill-stones, and grind meal*, that is, “Thou shalt be reduced from thy lofty seat, as mistress of kingdoms, to the lowest situation of a slave; thy captives shall be forced to grind at the mill, the lowest and most abject degree of drudgery.” The subsequent images are taken from a woman, who, from a state of elegance, is reduced to the lowest state of slavery, and exposed to the greatest indignities which could be offered to that sex. Instead of *there is no throne*, ver. 1. we may read *unthroned*.

*Ver. 3, 4. I will take vengeance]* These are the words of the God of Israel, whose province it is to take vengeance. The phrase, *I will not meet thee as a man*, is differently understood. Some suppose that it signifies, “I will shew thee neither mercy nor pity.” Vitringa renders it, “*Though I have not a man ready, or before me, who may execute the vengeance which I have determined; for*

“which reason I will raise up Cyrus, whom nobody thinks of, that it may appear to all the world that this is my work, and not the work of man.” And he thinks that this interpretation is confirmed by what the church adds in the 4th verse, that *their Redeemer was Jehovah*; that it was He, and He alone, who could have procured this wonderful deliverance for them.

*Ver. 5. Sit thou silent, &c.]* See ch. xiii. 19. xiv. 4. Bishop Newton observes, that after this destruction Babylon never recovered its ancient splendor: From an imperial it became a tributary city; from being governed by its own kings, and governing strangers, it came itself to be governed by strangers; and, the seat of empire being transferred to Shushan, it decayed by degrees, till it was at last reduced to utter desolation. Dissert. vol. i. p. 293.

*Ver. 6. I was wroth with my people]* The metaphor in this verse is taken from a father, who being angry with his children delivers them up to chastisement; but his anger soon subsiding, and his affection reviving, he turns his indignation against those who had executed his commands, in such a manner as to punish them immoderately and severely. The cruelty of the Babylonians is expressed by the strongest term, namely, their oppression of the *ancient*, the old and feeble, whose venerable grey hairs should be their sufficient protection.

*Ver. 7, 8. I shall be a lady for ever]* If we consider, that the city of Babylon had no less than a hundred gates made of solid brass; that its walls were 350 feet in height, and 87 in thickness; and that six chariots could go abreast upon them; that it was defended by the river Euphrates, and that it was supplied with provisions for many years;—it might well be deemed impregnable; and such a city as this might, with less vanity than any other, boast that she should continue for ever, if any thing human could continue for ever. So she vainly gloried in the verses before us; but the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah plainly and particularly foretold the destruction of this city. They lived towards the declension of the kingdom of Judah; and as they predicted the captivity of the Jews, so they likewise foretold the fall of their enemies; and they speak with such assurance of the event, that they describe a thing future, as if it were already passed. See Bishop Newton as before. We may read these verses, *And thou saidst, &c.—Thou hast never once laid these things to heart: neither*

*hast*

9 But these two *things* shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy forceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments.

10 For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else besides me.

11 Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off; and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, *which* thou shalt not know.

12 ¶ Stand now with thine enchantments,

and with the multitude of thy forceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail.

13 Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from *these things* that shall come upon thee.

14 Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: *there shall* not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it.

15 Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, *even* thy merchants, from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee.

*hast thou remembered the latter end of it: ver. 8. Therefore hear now this, thou voluptuary one, that sittest careless down, that sayest in thine heart, I, and none else [who but I?].*

*Ver. 9. These two things shall come to thee.]* This prophecy was twice fulfilled; having been accomplished the very night that Babylon was taken, when the Persian slew the king himself, and a great number of the Babylonians: and it was fulfilled a second time, when besieged by Darius. Being determined to hold out to the last extremity, they took all their women, and each man choosing one of them whom he liked best out of his own family, they strangled all the rest, that unnecessary mouths might not consume their provisions. By means of this shocking expedient they sustained the siege and all the efforts of Darius for twenty months, and the city was at last taken by stratagem. As soon as Darius had made himself master of the place, he ordered 3000 of the principal men to be crucified, and thus this prophecy was signally fulfilled, both by the hands of the Babylonians themselves, and by the cruelties exercised upon them by the conquerors. Bishop Newton. We may render the latter part of the verse, *They shall come upon thee in their perfection, notwithstanding the multitude of thy forceries, and the force of thy enchantments.*

*Ver. 13. Thou art wearied, &c.] Thou art nauseated with the multitude of thy devices.*

*Ver. 14. Behold, they shall be as stubble.]* The judgment to be inflicted upon the professors and encouragers of the vain arts above mentioned is here elegantly and metaphorically described. The prophet says, that all those mentioned in the 13th verse, like stubble, should be set on fire by the divine wrath, and so wholly consumed, that nothing of them should remain which could be serviceable for any purpose whatever; for, as from wood and other fuel, when burned, there remain embers, before which a person may warm himself, and glowing ashes before which one may sit, to drive away the cold; these, on the contrary, should be

consumed like stubble, so as to be wholly destroyed, and to leave nothing for any use or service. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 15. Thus shall they be unto thee, &c.] Thus shall they serve thee, upon whom thou hast spent thy pains; thy negotiators, with whom thou hast dealt from thy youth.* See Bishop Lowth's translation. See also ver. 12. *They shall wander every one to his quarter,* means, "They shall wander, by whatever ways they can, to the extreme boundaries of thy empire, to save themselves from the general calamity."

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Babylon had long sat as a queen, and seen her captives prostrate at her feet, a virgin kingdom, whom no conqueror had yet subdued; but now her doom is read: into the dust she must fall low; no more her monarchs grace the throne, seized by the Persian king; no more rioting in luxury and delicacies, her miserable inhabitants are reduced to the lowest drudgery, to grind at the mill, or driven in herds as captives before their lordly masters, stripped naked without compassion or humanity; for the vengeance is from God; and he, as Israel's Redeemer, now returns the cruelty they had shown his people. The noise which once resounded in the streets of Babylon is silenced: and in darkness, whither they retired, or in their prison-houses, in vain they lamented the loss of their kingdom, which should be no more restored. *Note;* (1.) They who abuse their power, and walk in pride, God delights to abase. (2.) It is well to be inured to hardship; those who are most delicately brought up, will feel every reverse of station with deeper anguish. (3.) When God visits in vengeance, the sinner may expect judgment without mercy.

2dly, All God's dealings are according to the strictest equity; if Babylon suffer, her sins have given abundant provocation. We have,

1. The black catalogue of her crimes.

[1.] Cruelty

## C H A P. XLVIII.

*God, to convince the people of their foreknown obstinacy, revealeth his prophecies : he saveth believers for his own sake : he exhorteth them to obedience, because of his power and providence : he lamenteth their backwardness : he powerfully delivereth his people out of Babylon.*

[Before Christ 712.]

**H**EAR ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah ;

which swear by the name of the LORD, and make mention of the God of Israel, *but not in truth, nor in righteousness.*

2 For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel ; The LORD of Hosts is his name.

3 I have declared the former things from the beginning ; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I shewed them ; I did *them* suddenly, and they came to pass.

[1.] Cruelty to God's people, God was wroth with his people, and meant to visit their iniquities with the scourge, and therefore gave them into the hands of the Chaldeans ; but they unmercifully chastised them with scorpions, paying no regard to age or station ; but on the ancients, whose hoary locks, or honours, should have pleaded for compassion, making their yoke heavy. *Note ;* They who cruelly oppress God's people, however they may triumph for a moment, will find a day of awful reckoning at hand.

[2.] Pride and security. Because her monarchy seemed established, she promised herself that her throne should be coeval with the days of time ; and neither regarding her sins nor warned by the threatnings denounced against her, sat secure in her own sufficiency, and despised her enemies. *Note ;* They who are most self-confident and secure, are nearest the precipice of ruin.

[3.] Love of ease and pleasure : Given up to the indulgence of sensual appetite, and confident that every day should return fraught with mirth and jollity, and no sorrow interrupt the jocund hours.

[4.] Detestable forceries, and magical arts, in which from their youth they were trained up, and wherein they placed their chief dependance : and all these are sins, which are remarked as found in Babylon mystical, and will be the causes of her destruction, Rev. xviii. 4—7. 23.

2. The doom of Babylon is read. She trusted in her wisdom, policy, wealth, and wickedness ; but deceived herself, as sinners usually do : her boasts can issue only in her confusion. Vain is her confidence ; in one day the evils from which she thought herself so secured, shall overtake her, her king and nobles be slain, her people captives. So sudden and terrible the destruction, she could neither foresee nor avert it. Fruitless would be every attempt of her astrologers and diviners ; wearied with disappointment, despair should seize her, when all the counsels of her magicians failed, and ruin approached. Her wife men, so far from delivering their country, should be unable to save themselves, utterly consumed by the Divine Judgment, as fuel reduced to dust by the flames. Her merchants, either those astrologers who had enriched themselves by their pretensions to science, or rather those who traded to Babylon, shall flee to secure themselves, *every one to his quarter, or passage*, glad to desert the devoted city, and eager to save themselves in their own land, from the impending danger. See Rev. xviii. 15. *Note ;* (1.) Sinners are strangely apt to promise themselves secrecy and impunity, and this

hardens their hearts against the Divine admonitions. (2.) The dangers, of which the proud and secure were least apprehensive, often suddenly surprize them ; and too late, to their astonishment, they discover the ruin which they cannot escape. (3.) The greatest monarch sits on a tottering throne, when wickedness loosens the pillars of it. (4.) Wisdom and wealth are no defence against the judgments of God. (5.) They who are the instruments of deceiving others, shall themselves feel the heaviest strokes of vengeance.

## C H A P. XLVIII.

THE fourth discourse of the fourth part of this prophecy, is contained in the present chapter, these may be divided into *two sections*. The *first* of these contains, *first*, a solemn address to the Jews of our prophet's own times, ver. 1, 2 ; *secondly*, a reproof to this people respecting their idolatry, and the true divinity of the God of Israel ; wherein is premised a conviction, drawn from the prophecies of the former times, delivered by Isaiah, and undeniably fulfilled ; ver. 3—5. A new conviction is formed from new prophecies delivered by our prophet, ver. 6, 7. The faulty disposition of the people towards these prophecies, revealed to them by God, is reproved, ver. 8. The punishment of the people for their incredulity is denounced, but with some softening of the divine clemency, ver. 9—11. The *second section*, exhibiting a discourse directed by God to his faithful people in banishment, shortly to be delivered by Cyrus, contains *first*, an address, with a magnificent preface respecting God, ver. 12, 13. *Secondly*, a conviction doctrinal and consolatory ; wherein the Almighty claims to himself the foretelling and raising up of Cyrus, ver. 14, 15. shews that this prediction, as well as many others, was delivered clearly and publicly ; ver. 16. and removes from himself the charge of those evils which happened to the nation, as the people might have enjoyed his favour if they had proceeded otherwise, ver. 17—19. *Thirdly*, it contains the adjuncts of this conviction ; *first*, a command to forsake Babylon, and to declare every where the benefit of this deliverance ; ver. 20. *Secondly*, the consequence of this benefit ; namely, the singular care of the divine providence towards the returning Jews, which is figuratively expressed ; ver. 21. and *thirdly*, a conclusion, wherein true peace and security are denied to the impious and obstinate sinners, ver. 22.

*Ver. 1, 2. Hear ye this, O house of Jacob ;* These verses contain a just and solemn address to the Jewish people ; who,

4 Because I knew that thou *art* obstinate, and thy neck *is* an iron sinew, and thy brow brafs;

5 I have even from the beginning declared *it* to thee; before it came to pass I shewed *it* thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them.

6 Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare *it*? I have shewed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them.

7 They are created now, and not from the beginning; even before the day when thou heardest them not: lest thou shouldest say, Behold, I knew them.

8 Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knew-

est not; yea, from that time *that* thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb.

9 ¶ For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off.

10 Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.

11 For mine own sake, *even* for mine own sake, will I do *it*: for how should *my name* be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another.

12 ¶ Harken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I *am* he; I *am* the first, I also *am* the last.

who, though by their profession and external worship seeming to cultivate the true religion, to call God their God, and to depend upon him, yet were obstinately incredulous, extremely inclined to idolatry, and little regardful of those prophecies which Isaiah and other true prophets delivered to them. The meaning of the phrase, *Are come forth out of the waters of Judah*, is very evident from Deut. xxxiii. 28. Numb. xxiv. 6, 7. Numerous nations are frequently compared in Scripture to wide extending rivers, and their progenitors sometimes to a sacred stream bursting out of a rock, and sometimes by profopocia to a river, as if it were a person pouring his waters out of an urn. The attributes of the Jewish people here enumerated, are peculiarly accommodated to the prophet's main scope and design in this chapter.

Ver. 3—6. *I have declared the former things*] The proof is here again drawn from the prediction of casual future events; either because this argument is unanswerable, and adapted to every capacity, or because Isaiah, while he proves the truth of the God of Israel by this argument, at the same time establishes his own authority as a prophet. See Jer. xxviii. 9. *The former things*, mean such events as had been predicted, and were already come to pass; see chap. xlii. 9. and more particularly those prophecies of Isaiah respecting the Jewish state, delivered in the former part of this book. The meaning of the last clause of this period, ver. 6. is, "*Thou hast heard, saith God, the whole of what I speak clearly foretold; which I would have thee diligently consider, carefully look into, and observe.*" Thou hast also seen the remarkable completion of these predictions. Can there be then so great a perversity of mind in thee, as to deny either of these things, or to refuse to declare and proclaim them. But if you declare and confess them, as your conscience must compel you, you cannot but give to me, and me alone, the due praise of true divinity." Our translation published in the reign of Henry VIII. reads this clause; *Thou heardest, and*

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*behold, it came to pass; and shall not you yourselves confess the same?* See Vitringa.

Ver. 6, 7. *I have shewed thee new things*] The *new things* refer to the prophecies respecting the deliverance of the Jewish people by Cyrus, and the consequence of that deliverance. *They are created now*, says the prophet, speaking of the first revelation of these things. The idea is elegant; for what is revealed exists by the word which proceeds from the mouth of God; which is the character of creation. The next words may be rendered, *And not from the beginning, nor before this day, hast thou heard them.*

Ver. 8. *Yea, thou heardest not*] These words may be taken in two senses; namely, as a confirmation of what is said in the preceding verse, that the Jews had no knowledge of these *new things* revealed to them before the revelation made by Isaiah: or, as containing a conviction of the inconsideration, incredulity, and prejudices of the Jewish people; who, notwithstanding the prophecies so clearly fulfilled among them, had neither *duly attended to them*, nor considered them, nor become obedient to God; which, he observes, was nothing strange, since this people, from the first time of their adoption, from their deliverance out of Egypt, which was as it were their birth, had been full of perfidy and transgression; and this, says Vitringa, appears to me to be the true sense of the passage. The words may be read, *Yea, thou heardest not, yea, thou knewest not; neither did thine ear from that time open.*

Ver. 9, 10. *For my name's sake.*] *For my name's sake will I moderate my anger, and for my praise I will refrain towards thee, &c.* ver. 10. *Behold, &c. I have proved, or had pity on thee in the furnace of affliction.* Silver is of the most difficult refinement, and requires a hotter and clearer fire than gold and other metals. The meaning therefore of the phrase, *I have refined thee, but not with silver*, is, that though God had punished his people in the Babylonish captivity, he had not done so with the utmost severity: *In the midst of judgment he had remembered mercy.*

4 S

Ver. 13.

13 Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens: *when* I call unto them, they stand up together.

14 All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear; which among them hath declared these *things*? the LORD hath loved him; he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm *shall be* on the Chaldeans.

15 I, *even* I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous.

16 ¶ Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there *am* I: and now the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me.

17 Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer,

the Holy One of Israel; *I am* the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way *that* thou shouldest go.

18 O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.

19 Thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me.

20 ¶ Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it *even* to the end of the earth; say ye, The LORD hath redeemed his servant Jacob.

21 And they thirsted not *when* he led them through the deserts: he caused the waters to

*Ver. 13. When I call, &c.]* Nothing can give us a more sublime idea of God than this passage. The idea is taken from servants, who, at the voice of their masters, instantly rise up; and stand ready to execute their commands. The whole creation, at the call of God, arises with prompt obedience, and is ready to execute his Sovereign will.

*Ver. 14, 15. All ye, assemble yourselves]* Instead of *The Lord hath loved him, &c.* we should read, *He whom Jehovah loveth, shall do his pleasure, &c.* To confirm the faith and hope of the believers in the Jewish church, the prophet here goes on to prove, that the subversion of the Babylonish monarchy by Cyrus, and the deliverance of the Jewish people from captivity in consequence, are the work of God their Saviour, the Angel of the covenant, the Son of God: and it will throw great light on this whole period to consider these as the words and address of that divine Person. The similarity of this passage with the preceding prophecies respecting Cyrus, need not be marked out to the attentive reader.

*Ver. 16. Come ye near unto me]* See chap. xlv. 19, 20. *From the time that it was, there am I,* means, "From the time that this expedition of Cyrus began first to exist:" *And now the Lord God hath sent me, and his Spirit:* "And now, when the event is hastening to its completion, Behold, I am present, sent by Jehovah, with the Spirit of the Father, to your succour and assistance." That *now* refers to the immediate time of their deliverance, appears from the 20th verse, and we have often observed, that the prophets speak of future events as if present. See Vitringa, and the more spiritual interpretation in the Reflections.

*Ver. 20, 21. Go ye forth of Babylon]* Hitherto the Son of God had proceeded with reproof, but the most gentle of its kind. In the mean time, the Chaldeans, in this part of the prophetic vision, are supposed to have been con-

quered by Cyrus; Babylon is supposed to be taken, and the time to be at hand wherein the captivity of the Jews should cease, and the edict for their deliverance be promulgated; when he turns himself, by an apostrophe, to the faithful among the people, exhorting, or rather commanding them, that they should depart with all speed from Babylon and the land of the Chaldeans, and declare throughout all the world, that God had redeemed his servant Jacob, ver. 20. and not only so, but had performed the most singular acts of providence and care for them in their return to their country, so as to enable them to finish their journey without inconvenience, ver. 21. The ideas in this verse are taken from God's deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, and are to be understood metaphorically, that, as God wrought wonders to procure the salvation of his people from Egyptian bondage, and by his mighty providence protected and preserved them, so would he, in like manner, take care of the captives delivered from Babylon, preserve them from dangers, and supply them with all things necessary for them. This he did by the remarkable favour wherewith he inspired Cyrus toward them. See Ezra, i. 1—4. and Vitringa; who is of opinion, that the prophecy has still a further and mystical view to the deliverance of the church from spiritual Babylon by Jesus Christ, that living rock whence spiritual waters flow for the salvation of his people. See 1 Cor. x. 4.

*Ver. 22. There is no peace, &c.]* "There is no peace, no serenity of mind and conscience,—more desirable than every earthly blessing; superior to all conception;—there is no durable prosperity on earth, no eternal salvation, or hope of salvation to the hypocrites, unbelievers and profane, the despisers of God and his prophetic word, they who honour him with their lips, but in their heart are far from him: because they have no part in the favour of God, which, without faith, reverence of the divine word, and



flow out of the rock for them: he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out.

22 *There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked.*

“and an humble obedience to the divine commands, cannot exist.” The same persons are here spoken of, as in ver. 1, 2. and chap. xlvi. 12. See Ezek. xx. 38. Amos, ix. 10.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The prophet here addresses the house of Jacob, in order to bring them to a conviction of their hypocrisy and idolatry, and to engage their humble return to God, from whom they had so greatly departed.

1. He charges them with the false and hypocritical professions which they made. They valued themselves highly, as being called by the name of Israel, and boasted their lineage from Jacob; they were of the royal race of Judah, the tribe that adhered to the temple, and the successors of David, when the rest revolted; they swore by the name of the Lord, owning him as their God and king, and engaging their fidelity to him, and made mention of the God of Israel, addressing him in their prayers and exercises of religious worship: they called themselves of the holy city, as counting it an honour to have a name in the church of God; and staid themselves upon the God of Israel, at least pretended to do so, as if the Lord of Hosts was the name on which alone their dependance was fixed; but all was false and faithless, *not in truth, nor in righteousness.* Note; (1.) Many claim the name of Christian, who continue strangers to the power of christianity. (2.) It is mere hypocrisy when persons only draw near to God with their lips, while their hearts are far from him. (3.) We have to do with a heart-searching God; and if our souls be insincere before him, vain is all the pageantry of external profession.

2. He urges what he had done to convince and convert their souls to him as the only true God, and to preserve and reclaim them from the shameful idolatry to which they were so addicted: from the beginning he had foretold what should happen to them, their sojourning in Egypt, deliverance, conquest of Canaan; and all came to pass suddenly and certainly; God's power in the fulfilment of his prophetic word appearing as evident as his prescience in the prediction. This they might easily discern, and ought to declare to the glory of God: a new revelation also God now gave them, which they never could have known, nor could their idols have informed them of, concerning their captivity in Babylon, and their deliverance by Cyrus; with all those other prophecies more immediately relative to the Gospel dispensation: and in all these things God intended to engage them to cleave to, and depend upon, him, as the only true God, besides whom there was no other.

3. God gives the reasons of his dispensations towards them. [1.] Because he knew they were obstinate, their neck an iron sinew, and their brow brass; stubborn and hard-hearted, rigid against conviction, and impudently disposed to deny God's work, if by his prophecies foregoing he had not indisputably proved that he was the author of all their mercies. [2.] He would cut off all pretence of ascribing these events to their idols, as they would else be vainly disposed to do; it being evident, by his foretelling those things which their idol priests never could, that the work was from God alone. [3.] He would stop their

boasting, who might pretend, when the event came to pass, that they had foreseen it; but now it was clear, that they had not the apprehension of what was coming till God's prophets revealed the counsels of God, hidden from the beginning, but now created and brought to light in the prophetic word. [4.] He would leave them inexcusable. Notwithstanding all he had spoken, their ear was not opened, and their hearts inattentive to the predictions which God had given: he knew them to be treacherous dealers, who had often backslidden from him, and from their first formation into a people had been transgressors; but he now left them without excuse, if they still refused to pay regard to his word, so plain, evident, and clear. Note; (1.) It is the true and humbling character of every man, that he is a transgressor from the womb. (2.) Original sin, in which we are born, is the pregnant source of all the actual evil that afterwards appears in our hearts and lives. (3.) God knows and remarks the inmost disposition of our souls, and an apostate nature is in his eyes the sin exceeding sinful. (4.) The word of God is designed to stain all human glory, and to show us how ignorant, as well as wicked, we must have been without Divine revelation. (5.) They who proudly and obstinately reject God's word, are deservedly left to perish in their native guilt and blindness.

2dly, Their guilt was a circumstance very discouraging; how could they hope for God's interposition? and their oppressors were so powerful that no prospect of human relief appeared. To support them, therefore, against their just fears,

1. God, not out of respect to them, but for his own glory, declares that he will deliver them: though they deserved to be utterly cut off, he will defer his anger; and, lest the Heathen nations might reproach him, as if he was unable to save his people, or might count their gods above him, he will refrain his arm from destroying them, and save them from their enemies. *Behold, and admire the grace, I have refined thee; by these sufferings to which they had been exposed, but not with silver, or among silver; have not kept them in the furnace till all their dross was purged away, for then the spirit must fail before him, if he dealt with them in strict justice; but I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction;* he made the afflictions they endured the means of calling them home to himself, and by their trials exercised and brightened their graces, and purified their souls from sin. Note; (1.) If God dealt with us according to our iniquities, then could no flesh living be saved. (2.) It is not for our deserts, but to manifest the glory of his grace, that God is pleased to spare and pardon. (3.) Affliction is often the blessed means of bringing those home to God who had before wandered far from the right way. (4.) It is a gracious sign of God's paternal affection toward us, when he is pleased in measure to correct us, and not to leave us wholly unpunished.

2. Though they could not help themselves, God will raise up a deliverer for them, who shall overthrow the kingdom of Babylon. Let Jacob hear the Divine determination, and Israel believe what he speaks, who is the

## C H A P. XLIX.

*Christ, being sent to the Jews, complaineth of them: he is sent to the Gentiles with gracious promises. God's love is constant to the faithful. The ample restoration of the church. The powerful deliverance out of captivity.*

[Before Christ 712.]

**L**ISTEN, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels

of my mother hath he made mention of my name.

2 And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me;

3 And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.

self-existent, eternal, and immutable Jehovah. He whose hand laid the foundations of the earth, and stretched out the heavens with such ease as if they had been but a span's breadth, at whose word the assembled hosts of both stand up, ready to execute his high behests; he is able to accomplish their salvation; let Israel therefore attend to the prophetic word, of which none among the gods of the heathen, or the wise men, could ever inform them. Cyrus, the beloved of the Lord, is appointed for their deliverer, to execute God's pleasure on Babylon, and to lay his arm of vengeance on the Chaldeans. God hath spoken, and his word is irreverfible; he will enable him for the work, bring him to the siege from a far country, and make his way prosperous, giving him victory in the battle, and success in all his enterprizes. *Note;* (1.) Cyrus is the type of God's beloved Son, sent down from heaven, and riding on prosperously; the conqueror of death, hell, and sin, and the glorious Redeemer of his faithful people. (2.) We may safely depend on the fulfilment of God's promises, however to human view the difficulties in the way of their accomplishment seem insurmountable. Is any thing too hard for God? (3.) They who have a Divine call, and are under Divine guidance, may be sure that their way shall be prosperous.

3dly, We have,

1. The call of God to attend the ministry of the prophet, or rather the call peculiarly of Christ, who seems to be spoken of, to the Jews to hear and receive his Gospel, and acknowledge his Divine mission. *I have not spoken in secret from the beginning,* but preached publicly in the synagogues, *from the time that it was,* from the beginning of his ministry, *there am I,* openly teaching the Gospel of the kingdom; or, *before the time that was,* ere he was become incarnate, *there was I,* existing from eternity in the bosom of the Father: *and now the Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me,* or *the Lord hath sent me,* having the fullest commission for the execution of the work of redemption, and *his Spirit* to make that work effectual, by bringing it near to the souls of men. *Note;* (1.) We have here the Trinity of persons in the Godhead clearly asserted. (2.) When God sends, he will qualify us for his service. (3.) It becomes us to hear with solemn reverence and attention the words of him whom God hath sent.

2. The Lord Jesus informs them of his character and design. *I am the Lord thy God,* without which he could not have been the Redeemer of mankind, nor could his faithful people have been able comfortably and confidently to trust their souls in his hands, *which teacheth thee to profit, or profitable things;* the doctrines of truth and holiness, such as their fallen state, their guilt and danger, the grace

revealed for sinners in the Gospel, the perfection of the atonement wrought out by him, and the fulness of the Spirit which resided in him, to be communicated to all believers; *which leadeth thee by the way which thou shouldest go;* Christ himself is the living way, his word is our guide, his grace our support, and the dispensations of his providence concur to lead his faithful ones toward their glorious rest.

3. He laments over those poor souls that sinned against their own mercies. Mat. xxiii. 37. *O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments!* which though some did, yet we see that the generality of the Jewish people rejected Christ and his Gospel, and thereby forfeited all the mercies which had been promised to the obedient, and brought their final desolations upon them. Had they heard and believed, then their *peace had been as a river, and their righteousness as the waves of the sea,* abundant and permanent. Their nation would have been increased exceedingly, and their stability secured for ever; but now, for their unbelief and impenitence, the very reverse is their case. *Note;* (1.) Sin robs us of all our joys. (2.) The remembrance of the mercies they have forfeited, as well as the torment they endure, will aggravate the miseries of the ungodly. (3.) It is a grief to the Saviour, to see poor souls rejecting their own mercies, and rushing on their ruin. (4.) They who perish eternally will have no blame to cast on God's mercy, but must confess that their own obstinacy and hardness of heart procured their destruction.

4. By the proclamation given to the Jews to depart from Babylon, is prefigured the great deliverance of sinners' souls from the bondage of corruption; which, through the preaching of the Gospel, should be effected in the faithful. They are called to go forth from Babylon and flee, not as by stealth, but with the voice of singing, openly exulting in their escape. With gladness they are commanded to publish their glorious redemption, wrought out for them by the power of God; and as God, in their first great deliverance from Egypt, led them through the wilderness safely, and brought water from the rock to slake their thirst, such would be still his care over them in their return from Babylon to Judæa. And this is most applicable to the state of all God's faithful people who go forth with joy from the house of their prison, and from the bonds of sin and Satan; publish to God's glory the redemption wrought out by Jesus for them; are safely led through all the dangers of this world, to them a howling wilderness; refreshed and comforted with the streams of divine grace; and brought at last to their native land, better than Canaan, even the inheritance provided for them among the saints in light.

4 Then I said, I have laboured in vain, vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God.

5. The obstinately impenitent are excluded from all the promised mercies. *There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked*; which may refer to those who chose their abode in Babylon, preferably to a return to Judæa; or more particularly to the Jewish nation, who, after their rejection of Christ and his Gospel, became a miserable, harassed, and troubled people, and continue so to this day. Or, more generally, it includes all impenitent sinners, who have no peace with God, no solid rest in their own consciences, no comfort in death, no hope in eternity, but the wrath of God present and eternal abideth on them.

## C H A P. XLIX.

THE fifth, last, and most excellent part of Isaiah's prophecies begins, according to Vitringa's division, at this chapter, and is divided into five discourses; the first of which is contained in chap. xlix. 1.—ver. 3. The second in chap. l. ver. 4. &c. and chap. li. The third in chap. lii.—lx. The fourth in chap. lxi. lxii. The fifth in chap. lxiii.—lxvi. The first discourse consists of three parts, which contain as many apostrophes or addresses; the first apostrophe or address is of the Messiah, Jesus the great teacher and Saviour, to the Gentiles; wherein we have first an exordium, calling upon the Gentiles to listen and attend; ver. 1. Secondly, a description of his person, and of the office to which he was appointed of his Father, by a solemn vocation: middle of ver. 1—3. A complaint of the small success of his function among the Jews, ver. 4. and an enarration of the great plan of redemption, whereby he was constituted the Teacher and Saviour, not only of the Jews, but also of the Gentiles; ver. 5, 6. The second address is of the Father to the Messiah, considered either in himself, or in his mystical body, the church of the believing Jews, at the beginning of the Gospel; wherein we have, first, a consolatory proposition, comforting him, in his state of humiliation, with the certainty of the glory to follow it, ver. 7. Secondly, a setting forth of the proposition, wherein the magnificent promise concerning the glorious state and great success of the Gospel is delivered more at large, ver. 8, 9. and the state of the people, joined to the church from among the Gentiles, as well as their continual increase, is described; middle of ver. 9—12. A congratulatory epiphonema from a chorus of believers is subjoined here, ver. 13. The third address is of God the Father, by his Spirit, to the whole body of the church, afflicted and persecuted at the beginning of the Gospel; wherein we have, first, a complaint of the church, as if neglected by God; ver. 14. Secondly, a gracious and consolatory reply from God, adapted to this complaint; first, general, wherein God assures her of his true and singular regard, ver. 15, 16; secondly, particular, wherein God informs her of the great and wonderful increase of her state, which should follow in a short time: this is comprehended in various articles: ver. 17—23. The prophet then answers an objection which might be raised against this comfort, from the power of Satan, and the extent of his empire in the world; ver. 24—26. and also

a second objection concerning the *divorcement* of the synagogue, together with the destruction of the Jewish state by the Romans: chap. l. 1—3. From this analysis, from the preceding prophecies, and from a view of the gospel-history, this last part of the book of Isaiah will be easily understood. We may just remark, however, as a general observation, that in speaking of the redemption by the Messiah, and the prosperous or afflicted state of the Christian church, the prophet frequently uses expressions taken from the redemption of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, and the state of the church about the time of Antiochus Epiphanes.

Ver. 1—3. *Listen, O isles*] In these verses we have first the exordium to the *isles, and far distant people*, that is to say, the Gentiles, who are frequently addressed by the appellation of *isles*, as we have had occasion to observe before. He who makes the address, namely, Jesus the Messiah, is sufficiently evident from the description of his person and office immediately following. *His person,—The Lord hath called me before the womb* [that is to say, before I was in the womb]; before I was in the bowels of my mother, he hath made mention of my name. St. Peter says of the Messiah, that he was thus called or mentioned before the foundation of the world. His prophetic office is next described in ver. 2. The meaning of which, out of the metaphor, is, "God hath ordained and appointed me, as a powerful teacher, whose instructions and convictions should penetrate deeply, and subdue the adversaries of my doctrine." So it is said of the Son of God in the Revelation, i. 16. *That out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword*; and chap. ii. 16. *I will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. In the shadow of his hand hath he hid me*; that is, "I have, as it were, been thus to this time hidden with God by his wisdom and providence, like a sword which is concealed in the scabbard: but, drawn forth from the scabbard in these latter times of the world, I appear as the teacher of truth, enforcing with mighty power my doctrines upon the minds of men." See Rom. xvi. 25, 26. The next clause is analogous to that preceding, and to the same purpose. His mediatorial office is set forth in the third verse, wherein the Messiah says, that the Father had said to him, *Thou art my servant*; that is, "I have designed thee alone, the man Christ Jesus, and have prepared thee as the mediator of mankind; on this condition, that thou shouldst be my servant; namely, to undergo the severest servitude; subjecting thyself to death, even the death of the cross, to sanctify and glorify my name by thy bitter sufferings, in the stead of lost mankind. Thou, therefore, art Israel; the only one among all the true Israelites, who art to exhibit in thyself all the characters of thy father Jacob, who, wrestling with God, prevailed; saved himself and his house, and therefore obtained the name of Israel." See ver. 5, 6.

Ver. 4. *Then I said, &c.*] These words contain the complaint of the Son of God, concerning the small fruit of his mission to the Jews, and the small hope of establishing

5 ¶ And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb *to be* his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength.

6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes

of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

7 Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, *and* his Holy One, To him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, kings shall see and arise,

blishing and successfully propagating his kingdom among them; similar to that which is attributed to the same great teacher and his apostles, ch. liii. 1. But at the same time he supports himself with the hope, that he should obtain a glorious and abundant fruit of his divine mission in the world; for that *his judgment or right was with God, and the reward of his work laid up with him.* Bishop Lowth reads the verse, *And I said, I have laboured in vain; for naught, and for vanity, I have spent my strength: nevertheless my cause is with JEHOVAH; and the reward of my work with my God.*

*Ver. 5, 6. And now, saith the Lord*] This passage is connected with the whole preceding period, and with each part of it; for the Messiah, in the beginning of this discourse, ver. 1, 2. having addressed the Gentiles, and called upon them to hear him, as an eminent teacher, he instructs them in these words, that he did this by the command of the Father, who had promised to him the glory of bringing the Gentiles to the obedience of faith, after he, as his servant, had proved his obedience to the Father as his Lord; which glory is here set forth as the greatest. Again, as the Messiah had taught in what follows, ver. 3. that God had appointed him as his distinguished servant to effect great and glorious things, and thence had related the small fruit of his ministry among the Jews, yet had signified at the same time that he was well persuaded of an abundant reward for his labours—he hence takes occasion to declare this grand plan of salvation, as well to shew the foundation of his hope and confidence in the future reward, as to teach obliquely, that the incredulity of the Jewish nation was to be considered as the occasional cause of the calling of the Gentiles to the dispensation of the Gospel. This period, therefore, contains a declaration of the two-fold honourable condition which is here proposed by the Father to the Messiah, with respect to the two-fold object for whose conversion and salvation he was to labour, by the will of the Father; namely, the *Jewish people*, and the *Gentile world*, to be brought by him to the communion of the blessing of Abraham: which conditions are so proposed and described, as at the same time to comprehend the *office*, and the *honour* as a consequence and reward of that office. The former part, which respects the Jews, is contained in ver. 5.; the latter, which respects the Gentiles, in ver. 6. A parenthesis is placed between each, at the end of ver. 5. wherein a reason is given why so great and honourable an office is proposed to him, namely, because he was *glorious in the eyes of the Lord*; and by what means he should be sufficient for the discharge of so great an office, because *God was his strength*. Bishop Lowth renders the 5th verse, *And now thus saith JEHOVAH;*

*(who hath formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring back again Jacob unto him, and that Israel unto him may be gathered: therefore am I glorious in the eyes of JEHOVAH, and my God is my strength;)* it is a small thing for thee, &c. It is as absurd as it is vain in the Jews, says Bishop Newton, to apply these prophecies to the profelytes whom they have gained among the nations; for the number of their profelytes was very inconsiderable, by no means suited to answer these pompous descriptions. Neither was their religion ever designed by its founder for an universal religion, their worship and sacrifices being confined to one certain place. There was indeed to be a religion which was designed for all nations, to be preached in all, and to be received in all; but what prospect was there that such a generous institution should proceed from such a narrow-minded people as the Jews; or, that the Gentiles, who hated and despised them, should ever receive a religion from them? Was it not much more likely that they should be corrupted by the example of all the nations around them, than that they should be the happy instruments of reforming the world, and converting some of all nations to the worship of the one only God in spirit and in truth? A revolution of this kind was certainly improbable; but, however great the improbability of it was at the time of the prophecy, let the planting of the Gospel, and the present state of christianity show whether it has not been partly fulfilled. See Dissert. vol. i. p. 236.

*Ver. 7. Thus saith the Lord*] We have here a new preface, containing a consolatory address of God the Father, directed to the Messiah, and his mystical body, the church of the first believers; which, persecuted, despised, and exposed to the public hatred and envy, is supported with the strong consolation to be drawn from the exceeding honour which in due time it should obtain in the world, proposed in this verse, and declared at large in the subsequent ones. The titles of *Redeemer* and *Holy One of Israel* are frequently applied to the Father, as well as to the Son, by the prophets. It is the office of the Father to fulfil the promises given to the Son and his mystical body, which are here addressed by three epithets; *Him who is despised of men;—him who is abhorred by the nation [of the Jews];—a servant of rulers*; whereby is to be understood Christ, in his first and persecuted church; for “it is very frequent in Scripture to mention Christ and his church as one person, to whom some things are attributed which pertain only to the head, some which pertain only to the body, and some which pertain to both:” a rule which is of great use in interpreting the Scriptures. We may render the latter part of the verse, *Kings shall see, and shall rise up; princes, and they shall worship; because of the Lord,*

*who*

princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, *and* the Holy One of Israel, and he shall chuse thee.

8 Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;

9 That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that *are* in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures *shall be* in all high places.

10 They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.

11 And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted.

12 Behold, these shall come from far: and lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.

13 ¶ Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.

14 But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my LORD hath forgotten me.

15 Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.

16 Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of *my* hands; thy walls *are* continually before me.

*who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who hath chosen thee. Kings shall see, and arise,* refers to ver. 6. namely, at the light and salvation discovered by the Messiah. See chap. ix. 3. and the 23d verse of this chapter.

Ver. 8—12. Thus saith the Lord] In this period the general promises given to the Messiah and his mystical body, ver. 7. are more fully explained. In the first place, the desirable success of the Gospel, in converting the Gentiles, is described, as well as the church which would be collected from the Gentiles, ver. 8.—middle of ver. 9.: then the flourishing state of this collected church in a spiritual view. The passages will be clearer from the following alterations of the version, ver. 8. Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time will I hear thee, and in a day of salvation will I help thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to raise up the earth, and to parcel out, or, give possession of, the desolated heritages: ver. 9. By saying to the prisoners, Go forth; and to those who are in darkness, Come into light: they shall be by the highways, &c.: ver. 10. Even to the springs, &c.: ver. 11. And my causeways, or [lower] roads, shall be exalted: ver. 12. Behold, they shall come from far; and behold, these, &c. and these from the land of the Pelusians, or Egyptians. See ch. xlii. 6, 7. The spiritual reference of this passage to Gospel privileges is sufficiently evident. We may just observe, that in the description of the flourishing state of the church, the prophet speaks of those delivered from prison and darkness, under the metaphor of a flock feeding in commodious pastures under the care of a faithful shepherd, guarded by him from the burning heat of the sun, and supplied by him with food and water sufficient for all their desires. The convenience of spiritual pasture is set forth in the latter part of the 9th verse; the sufficiency and abundance of that pasture in the words, they shall not hunger nor thirst, ver. 10.; their immunity from affliction and persecution in the next words; and their wonderful increase, under the protection and favour of God, in verses 11, 12. We

may just remark, that St. John, in the Revelation, applies these words of the prophet to the time of the sixth seal.

Ver. 13. And will have mercy] And hath had mercy.

Ver. 14—16. But Zion said] The Holy Spirit here proceeds to comfort the afflicted church more particularly, taking occasion from the consolatory period immediately preceding, with which the present is connected: But Zion hath said,—“These things being so, saith the Lord, the church being blessed with so many excellent promises, “what cause hath it of complaint? Why does it not rather, from the hope before it, express the greatest joy? “But indeed, so far from this, it pours forth its complaints “of the neglect of my providence towards it.” There is nothing difficult in the words of the complaint; ver. 14. The time to which it alludes, according to Vitringa, was that of the cruel persecution of the church under the Romans, in the first days of Christianity. A general and very affectionate consolation, consisting of two articles, is subjoined in the 15th and 16th verses, which cannot fail at all times to give the highest comfort to believers. The image in the 15th verse, it is true, is common and frequent; yet it is wrought up with so much grace, embellished with so much elegance, and expressed in such pathetic terms, that nothing can exceed it in beauty or force; nothing can convey a stronger idea of the maternal, the more than maternal regard, which God hath for his believing people. The turn at the end is more expressive than a volume; Yea, they may forget, yet will I never forget thee. The article in the 16th verse will be better understood, when we recollect that it was customary among the eastern nations, to burn, or otherwise to imprint upon their hands, not only the names, but likewise the representation of the walls and forts of cities; and, in order to render the drawing lasting and indelible, they were wont to use the juice of *henna*, or cypress, to impress the idea of them the stronger. Jehovah is described as making use of this expedient of imprinting the picture of the sacred city on his hands,

17 Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee.

18 ¶ Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the LORD, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth.

19 For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away.

20 The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell.

21 Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath

brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where *had they been?*

22 Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in *their* arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon *their* shoulders.

23 And kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing-mothers: they shall bow down to thee with *their* face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

24 ¶ Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered?

25 ¶ But thus saith the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.

26 And I will feed them that oppress thee

hands, that he might continually have it before his eyes, always in his care and memory. See Bishop Lowth's *Prelections*, p. 139. Michaelis's notes, and Vitringa.

*Ver. 17—23. Thy children shall make haste*] General promises comfort the afflicted less than particular ones: the prophet therefore proceeds to these, which are drawn from the future benefits to be conferred by God upon the church; four of which are here more especially enumerated: *first*, a deliverance from internal enemies, hurtful to its state, in ver. 17; which, according to Bishop Lowth, and after the LXX should be rendered, *They shall soon become thy builders, who have overthrown thee; and they who have destroyed thee shall come out of thee;* that is, "There shall be no more within thee persecutors, enemies, and destroyers." *Secondly*, a wonderful increase of this community, exceeding all belief; ver. 18, 19. *Thirdly*, the destruction of external enemies afflicting the church, ver. 20, 21. in which verses the prophet sets forth more at large what he had just before said respecting the increase of the church, after it had struggled through the great afflictions which it was to suffer. *Fourthly*, the earnest and solicitous regard of the kings and princes of the world towards the church, together with their conversion, ver. 22, 23. See chap. ix. 14. and Vitringa. The author of the *Observations*, upon the latter clause of the 22d verse, remarks from Pitts, that the Algerines never take either apprentices or hired *servants*; but "such as have occasion for servants buy slaves, and bring them up to their household-work, as our *servant-maids* here in England; who, as soon as they have done up all their work in the house, are usually allowed the liberty to go abroad, and visit their countrymen, commonly

"bearing each a child with them; and if the child be a boy, it rides on the slaves' shoulders." Sandys makes a like remark, as to the manner of carrying children in the east, observing, that as we bear ours in our arms, they carry theirs astride on their shoulders. Concerning the phrase, *licking the dust*, &c. see Psa. lxxii. 9. and the *Observations*, p. 255.

*Ver. 24—26. Or the lawful captive delivered?*] *Or the captive company of the rigorous or terrible one be delivered?* [read צַרִּיק *zarak* for צַרִּיק *zarak*, with St. Jerome.] *Ver. 25. Yea, thus saith the Lord, &c.* God had promised very great and excellent things to his church; but to a person seriously considering the state of that church, and comparing it with the power and strength of its enemies, and particularly its chief enemy, Satan, who held the nations in ignorance and darkness, a doubt naturally arose, whether it could possibly be, that this prey, so long possessed by Satan, could be extorted from him, so that he might be driven from his strong fort, and the rulers of the world held in subjection by him might be delivered from their servitude. Isaiah resolves this doubt of the church, and teaches, that it should certainly come to pass that Satan, this *mighty one*, should be driven from his fort, his captives delivered, ver. 25. and the adversaries of the church perish by their mutual slaughter of each other; ver. 26. which is to be understood metaphorically, and refers to the intestine wars by which princes and people, armed to their mutual destruction, plunge their destroying swords in each other's bowels, and as it were feed upon each other's flesh and blood. See chap. ix. 19, 20. Zech. xi. 9. and Rev. xvi. 6. Nothing can be more remarkably fulfilled than this prophecy was in the time of Dioclesian,

to

with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the

LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.

to which it may in its primary sense refer; though certainly it has reference to the universal spread of the Gospel in the latter days.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The former chapter related chiefly to the salvation of the Jews; this looks much farther, even to the salvation of Gentiles as well as Jews, through the preaching of the Gospel.

1. The isles are summoned to attend the word of their God and Saviour, which should go forth into all lands; and distant realms are called to hear the glad tidings of salvation through a Redeemer.

2. His mission and authority are set forth. *The Lord hath called me from the womb*, from eternity, to be a prophet, priest, and king to his faithful people; *from, or before, the bowels of my mother hath made mention of my name*, his name Jesus being given him by the angel before his conception. *And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword*; so piercing and powerful his word, that the powers of darkness fell down before it, and deep conviction seized the sinners' hearts; *in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me*, during the days of infancy, when Herod sought to destroy him; *and made me a polished shaft, or choice arrow*, bright and sharp. *In his quiver hath he hid me*, till the fulness of time came that he should be manifested in the flesh; *and said unto me, Thou art my servant*, (for in this form he consented to appear,) *O Israel, in whom I will be glorified*, God's perfections being never so eminently displayed, as in the salvation wrought out by his incarnate Son.

3. He complains of the little effect that his preaching produced on the Jewish people: he laboured in vain, and spent his strength for nought. They paid no attention to his miracles, nor were convinced by his word; yet God knew the fidelity with which he discharged his trust, and his word was approved, and would be rewarded by him. *Note*; (1.) It is no uncommon complaint for ministers to make, that to the most of their congregations they labour in vain. (2.) We must not be discouraged if we see not all the success that we hoped for: when we are conscious of our own simplicity, we may quietly leave the matter in the hands of God. (3.) It is not always lost labour, where the effects are not immediately seen: the seed which Christ sowed in his life grew most plentifully after his death. (4.) Our success enters not so much into our reward, as our fidelity.

4. With two encouraging promises God answers his complaints. He had formed him to be his servant, and appointed him to seek and save the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But though the people in general rejected his Gospel, yet, [1.] He should be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and God would be his strength, to carry him through all the difficulties of his arduous work. Thus we see him attended by angels at his birth, ministered to by them in his agony, transfigured on the mount, ascending from the dead, and exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high. [2.] He should not merely be a Sa-

viour to the faithful Israelites; but on the Gentiles his light should arise, and his salvation be spread to the ends of the earth; whence converts would be gathered into the church, unspeakably more numerous than those of his own nation, who should reject him: and this we see in part fulfilled, and fulfilling daily, till the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in. *Note*; (1.) The soul is in utter darkness till Christ in his Gospel enlightens the eyes of our minds, and guides us into paths of peace. (2.) Christ is the only salvation for lost man; out of him there is no hope.

2dly, We have,

1. The humiliation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus. God the Father, the Redeemer of Israel, encourages his dear Son under his abasement: in the days of his flesh he would be *despised* of men, *abhorred* of his own nation, and crucified; *a servant of rulers*, insulted by the Jewish and Roman chiefs: yet great was the glory to which he should be advanced: the kings of the earth should do him homage, and princes bow down to him; as was the case when the Roman empire under Constantine embraced the profession of Christianity, and will be more abundantly fulfilled when all nations shall come and worship before him.

2. God promises him all support in the day of his trouble. He will answer his prayers, and help him in the trying hour, when on the cross he hung, accomplishing the great atonement for sinful man. *Note*; (1.) Whenever the penitent lifts up his soul in prayer to God, he will find it an acceptable time. (2.) God never forsakes the sincere seeker in his distress, but will succour and save him at his cry.

3. He is assured that he shall see of the travail of his soul in the salvation of his faithful people. *I will give thee for a covenant of the people*, as their great covenant-head and representative, in whom they would be accepted, and entitled to the blessings of grace and glory, which by his blood and infinite merit he obtained for them; *to establish or raise up the earth, and cause to inherit the desolate heritages*; by the preaching of his Gospel, replenishing his church from the Gentile world, which before was desolate, and the members of it comparatively few, *that thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves*; the souls of sinners being under the bands of iniquity, shut up in the darkness of ignorance and error, and obnoxious to the justice of God, till Christ by his pardoning word cancels our guilt, by his renewing grace enlightens our minds, and brings us forth into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, to shew forth the change that he hath wrought, and therein to make his glory to appear. And those who are thus brought to him in faith—*they shall feed in the ways*, in the word and ordinances of God; *and their pastures shall be in all high places*, where there is plenty of nourishment, and safety from all attacks. *They shall not hunger nor thirst*, shall want no temporal or spiritual good; *neither shall the heat nor sun smite*

## C H A P. L.

*Christ sheweth that the dereliction of the Jews is not to be imputed to him, by his ability to save, by his obedience in that work, and by his confidence in God's assistance. An exhortation to trust in God, and not in ourselves.*

[Before Christ 712.]

**T**HUS saith the LORD, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I

have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.

2 Wherefore, when I came, *was there* no man? when I called, *was there* none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it

*smite them; God will preserve them from the power of temptation, and cover them from the severity of persecution. For he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, with all the tenderness of a shepherd: even by the springs of water shall he guide them, filling their souls with consolations, and, as they are under divine conduct, making them happy in divine comfort. Every obstacle in their way shall be removed; I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted, that the faithful may see the straight path before them, and walk safely and securely therein: and as, at Cyrus's proclamation, the Jews assembled from all parts of the land of Chaldea to return to Zion; so, in greater numbers, shall converts flock into the church of Christ. Behold! the glorious sight; these shall come from far: and lo! these from the north, and from the west, and these from the land of Sinim; from all quarters of the globe whither his Gospel should go forth, multitudes should join themselves to the Lord, which, in the apostles' days, was eminently verified, and shall be yet more abundantly seen in the latter days. Note; (1.) Christ is our covenant-head; and by faith all the blessings of this new covenant are derived from him. (2.) Miserable is the sinner's state, till Christ comes to set him free; yet how many sleep carelessly in their chains, and never consider that the darkness of sin must shortly issue in the outer darkness of hell! (3.) True believers are the Saviour's peculiar care, and he will see that they shall want no manner of thing that is good. (4.) The way to glory hath difficulties, but none so great but that Almighty grace can make us more than conquerors. (5.) Were we left to ourselves a moment, how quickly should we like silly sheep go astray? Blessed be God, we are not left to our own keeping, but are under the care of a watchful shepherd!*

3dly, The deliverance of Israel from Babylon was just matter of abundant joy: but how much greater is due for the redemption of Jesus, the desire of all nations?

1. The whole creation is represented as bursting forth into songs of joy on this glorious event. The afflicted are comforted, the miserable find mercy, and heaven and earth unite to celebrate the Saviour's praise. *Note; We can never be thankful enough for redeeming love, nor will eternity suffice to speak the praises of our Lord.*

2. The state of despondence into which Zion had fallen served to heighten the joy of their deliverance. *Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me: in their long captivity they were ready to faint, and despair of relief; and many a time the church of God has been reduced so low, driven by persecution into the desert, that it seemed forsaken of God. And thus it is with too many in seasons of temptation, when under darkness*

they are ready to despair, and give up all for lost. But hear,

3. God's answer to Zion's complaint: nothing can be conceived more expressive of his love, tenderness, and care, toward his believing people. *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Strange as it may appear, such an unnatural monster might perhaps be found; but, with tenderness infinitely surpassing, God never forgets, never ceases to love and protect those simple souls that hang upon him. On his hands they are engraved, and as a signet precious to him. Perhaps some allusion may be had to the prints of the nails in the hands of Jesus, the love-marks which he bears for the sake of his faithful people. Thy children shall make haste, or thy builders; either Gospel-ministers, who should assiduously labour to build up the church, or converts that should flock into it; while thy destroyers, and they that made thee waste, shall go forth of thee; the Babylonians, or rather all the persecutors and corruptors of God's church, such as antichrist and his followers, who shall be destroyed at the coming of Jesus, and cast into outer darkness. Note; (1.) The love of Christ toward his believing people is so surpassing great, that wherever it is truly believed and known, it cannot but powerfully constrain the heart. (2.) When Christ calls, we must make no delay. (3.) The damnation of the wicked is as sure as the salvation of the faithful.*

4thly, Great and precious promises of the increase and glory of the church are here revealed. A glimpse of this appeared when the Jews returned from their captivity; a brighter display of it was made when the Gospel was first preached; but the full blaze seems yet reserved for the times to come, when all nations shall be called to the obedience of the faith.

1. A vast increase shall be made to the church. *Lift up thine eyes; behold the numerous converts assembling from every quarter, ornaments to their profession by the holiness of their lives, as the jewels which adorn a bride. Thy waste and thy desolate places, the countries before destitute of true religion shall be filled with faithful souls, and all their enemies confounded shall perish. The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, cut off by the persecuting powers of the earth, shall spring up as a plenteous harvest, from the blood of the slain martyrs; or, the children of thy widowhood, when the church seemed bereft of all her sons and daughters by the prevalence of the man of sin, shall say again, or, shall yet say in thine ears, The place is too strait for me; such a sudden and strange increase of converts shall be made. With pleasing surprise the glad mother shall behold the children that*



cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because *there is* no water, and dieth for thirst.

3. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and

I make sackcloth their covering.

4. The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to *him that is* weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.

that God hath given her, and, wondering, inquire who hath begotten them, and whence they come, so unexpected a comfort to her widowed state; and the answer is, They come from Gentile lands, called by the word of Gospel-grace, and listed under the banners of a crucified Jesus; and so eager are they to have a place in the spiritual Zion, that the weak and feeble are borne upon the shoulders of the strong; or, they will bring their children with them, and enroll them in the visible church: and perhaps it may also refer to the assistance which the Gentiles shall give the Jews, when the Gospel shall be preached to them with power. *Note*; (1.) However low the church may be reduced, her latter end shall have great increase. (2.) They who have a concern for their own souls, cannot but be solicitous that others, especially their own children, may be brought to the knowledge of Christ and his Gospel.

2. The church shall not only be increased in number, but be highly honoured. Kings shall be nursing-fathers, and queens nursing-mothers to it; such as Cyrus, Ahasuerus, and Esther, were to the Jews; or rather such as Constantine and Helena, and other Christian monarchs, have been; and which will be still farther seen, when all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. *They shall bow down to thee with their face towards the earth, with profoundest submission, and lick up the dust of thy feet; ready to serve the church in the lowest offices, and to shew affection and regard to the meanest of Christ's members. And thou shalt know that I am the Lord, by such wondrous exertion of his power to make all nations obedient to the faith; for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me; the performance of all his promises shall be seen in their season, and the hopes of his waiting people shall never be disappointed; therefore, my soul, trust thou still in the Lord!*

5thly, Deliverance is promised, but great difficulties are in the way.

1. We have an objection, raised either by their proud oppressors, as despising the prophetic word; or by the unbelieving Jews, as distrusting it, *Shall the prey be taken from the mighty? such as were the Babylonian monarchs; or the lawful captive be delivered?* of which so little probability appeared. And this is applicable to our souls taken captive by the devil, and by our willing servitude surrendered into his hands, who is strong to keep his prisoners; and it is a miracle of mercy if any sinner be rescued from his bands.

2. God, by express promise, assures his people that it shall be done. Mighty as their oppressors are, and terrible, they are not too great for God to cope with. He will espouse their quarrel, overcome their foes, and save their children, plucking them from the power of their enemies. Nay,

he will do more; he will utterly consume their enemies, will visit them with the forest judgments, and make the world acknowledge his power to abase his foes, and his love toward his faithful children. And this is spiritually fulfilled daily in the souls of sinners, by divine grace delivered from the bonds of sin and Satan (that strong man armed), and saved from all their enemies; and will also literally be fulfilled in the destruction of antichrist, and the persecuting powers of Popery, Paganism, and Mahometanism, when Christ shall make his glory to appear, and all the world be forced to own both his power to save and to destroy to the uttermost.

#### CHAP. L.

*Ver. 1—3. Thus saith the Lord*] In the preceding period of the last chapter, a doubt respecting the great enemy of the church was removed: but another doubt exercised the afflicted church about the same time in which we have placed the scene of this prophecy: for as at that time the Jewish nation was engaged in a war with the Romans, which seemed to threaten the entire destruction of their state, the true church, among the Jews, plainly perceived from hence, that God had entirely cast off and divorced this people, which was a matter of great affliction to them. Therefore the distressed Sion wanted comfort in this respect, which God gives in these words, teaching, *first*, that he had publicly divorced their mother, and delivered her to the power of the Romans, being wholly compelled by reasons of justice for their enormous crimes and iniquities; the greatest of which was, their contempt of that salvation which he had offered them: *ver. 1.*—middle of 2. *Wherefore when I came,*—and *when I called*, refers to the appearance of the Son of God among the Jews, and his calling them to repent, and accept his salvation. See John, vii. 28. *Secondly*, That he wanted not power to save; concerning which he speaks in very magnificent terms, alluding to the deliverance from Egypt:—middle of *ver. 2.* and 3. See Hab. iii. 8. Vitringa thinks that the third verse alludes to the overthrow of Sennacherib's army. See Rev. vi. 12. The mystical signification is, that the Son of God, as the avenger of his church, can easily destroy, utterly subvert, and reduce to blackness and desolation, the greatest empires which oppose the designs of his kingdom and providence. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 4. The Lord God hath given me, &c.*] The second discourse of the fifth part of this book extends to the 17th verse of the following chapter. It is divided into two sections; the former of which, in the present chapter, contains a discourse of the Messiah, both historical, or narrative, and doctrinal, by way of apostrophe, directed to the hearers. In the *historical* part, he relates, *first*, that

5 ¶ The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.

6 I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

7 ¶ For the Lord GOD will help me: therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.

8 *He is* near that justifieth me: who will contend with me? let us stand together: who

*is* mine adversary? let him come near to me.

9 Behold, the Lord GOD will help me: who *is* he *that* shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.

10 ¶ Who *is* among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh *in* darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.

11 Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that

he was appointed to the excellent office of preaching the Gospel, and was immediately instructed by God for that purpose: ver. 4. *Secondly*, that he had shewn the greatest readiness to undertake, and the greatest diligence to fulfil, this office; ver. 5. As well as *thirdly*, the greatest patience and constancy, *first*, amid reproaches, injuries, and contumelies brought upon him: the grounds of which constancy, he shews to be, his confidence in the assistance of God, and his full persuasion of his good-will towards him, ver. 6, 7. *Secondly*, amid the calumnies and contradictions of his adversaries, none of whom, however, could stand before him, God approving and justifying his cause: ver. 8, 9. In the *doctrinal* part, he *first* graciously addresses those who fear the Lord; and foretels to them a happy end, ver. 10. *Secondly*, he foretels to his adversaries destruction, to arise from those very things wherein they sought salvation, ver. 11. This chapter wants very little more comment than the present analysis, and a reference to the history of our Lord. The meaning of the phrase, *To speak a word*, &c. is to teach the doctrine of grace to the spiritually weary. See chap. lxi. 1. The next clause is a metaphor taken from a diligent school-master, who early every morning rouses his scholars to hear his instructions; and the meaning is, that he had every day, from morning to evening, the illuminating grace of the Holy Spirit with him, to instruct him in the perfect knowledge of all things which concerned his state, his function, and the necessities of his church. Literally the passage runs thus, *Every morning he plucketh my ear, that I may hear like those who are instructed*. See Matt. xi. 28. and Psal. i. 2. which many of the ancients have understood of the man Christ Jesus. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 5. The Lord God hath opened mine ear*] An *open ear* signifies a mind prompt and ready to receive, understand, and distinguish, the doctrines which are taught it, and to obey the commands which are carried through the ears to the mind. See chap. xlii. 18. The completion of this and the following verses, in the Messiah, is too evident to need pointing out.

*Ver. 8. Who is mine adversary?*] *Who will hold suit against me?*

*Ver. 9. Lo, they all shall wax old as a garment*] The simple sense of this metaphorical expression is, that all the adversaries of Christ should be abolished and done away, like a garment, which grows vile and useless by wearing,

and is at length consumed by the moths. This is expressed plainly and literally, chap. xli. 11. See also Psal. lxxiii. 27. Some think that here is an allusion to the old œconomy, which, under the dispensation of the new, was entirely to grow old and vanish away. See Psal. cii. 26, 27. compared with Heb. i. 10, 11, 12.

*Ver. 10. Who is among you that feareth the Lord*] After the Messiah had prophetically described his condition among the Jews, he addresses himself to the Jewish people, who, being divided into two classes, one of believers, his disciples, the other of the rebellious, who, he foresaw, would perish in their own devices; he applies to both, but in a different manner; comforting the former in the doubtful beginnings of the new œconomy; and foretelling to the latter the destruction which would come upon them. The consolatory address in this verse is of perpetual use: for, who may not apply it in the doubtful and uncertain state of his affairs to the support of his faith and hope? It is however, in its literal sense here, to be restrained to that solicitude and anxiety, that heaviness and sorrow, which involved the first believers, from the unsettled and persecuted state of the church. See Heb. x. 35, 36.

*Ver. 11. Behold, all ye, &c.*] *Behold, all ye who strike out fire, and place fuel around; walk in the light of your fire, and of the fuel you have kindled*. It is universally agreed, that the adversaries of the kingdom of Christ are here meant, particularly the Scribes and Pharisees, and all those who were most solicitous for the destruction of Christ, and who became afterwards the principal cause of the destruction of their own nation. The prophet's metaphor, in a general view, exhibits *seditions* and restless men, who, accustomed to stir up and to cherish commotions and seditions to ruin others, are by those very means themselves involved in ruin. See chap. 17, 18. The prophet seems to refer more immediately to the state of Jerusalem besieged and destroyed by the Romans.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, God will vindicate his ways to men, and prove his justice in the rejection of the Jewish people.

1. He desires that the cause of their rejection may be examined. *Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement?* intimating, either that God had not cast them off, but they, like an adulteress, had treacherously departed from him; or, that if he had divorced them, if the bill was produced, the cause would be found abundantly to vindicate his proceeding:

compass *yourselves* about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.'

ceeding: or *which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?* fathers having such a right over their children among the Jews: but God owed nothing either to the Babylonians or Romans; and therefore, if they were captives, it was not of him, but themselves. *Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away;* to gratify their vile lusts, they provoked God, by their idolatries especially; and at last, by crucifying the Redeemer, they brought upon themselves destruction. *Note;* (1.) Though all who are saved owe it to God's free and unmerited grace, none are damned but must own it the just reward of their own obstinate impenitence. (2.) If sinners sell themselves to work wickedness, they can only hope to earn the wages of sin.

2. He upbraids them with their inattention to his calls by all his prophets, and especially by his Son, who came himself to warn them, yet none regarded. They paid no credit to his word, nor would be persuaded, that he who appeared in circumstances so mean was the almighty Redeemer promised, though he had given such instances of his glorious power in their former deliverances. At his rebuke the sea was divided; by him Jordan became a dry ground; he slew the fish of Egypt, when the rivers were turned into blood, and covered the Egyptians with that thick darkness which might be felt. Or it may refer to his power in raising the thick clouds, and, when he pleases, eclipsing the luminaries of heaven; in all which works his omnipotence is manifested.

2dly, We have our Lord proceeding in his work of redemption, for which he is every way so fully qualified.

1. As endued with the highest wisdom, that he might know how to preach the Gospel which brings rest to the weary soul; and constantly receiving from his Father, as the great prophet of his church, those lessons of instruction, which, with fidelity and zeal, rising up early, he inculcated on his disciples. *Note;* (1.) One of the greatest qualifications of a minister of God is, to know how to address the troubled conscience, and to speak the seasonable word to calm the tumult of the soul. (2.) It is God who gives the ability, and he alone can add the blessing. (3.) They who would serve God in the Gospel of his Son, must attentively hear him speaking in his revealed word, for there are all the hidden treasures of wisdom. (4.) Morning by morning must we be found upon our knees, asking the wisdom which cometh from above; for the most laborious researches of the human understanding in the Scriptures, without the teaching of God's Spirit, will never make us wise unto salvation.

2. Patiently suffering, he voluntarily yielded himself up to his Father's will; as the servant who had his ears bored, *Exod. xxi. 5, 6.* became his master's property for ever; and when he was called to the severest trials, in the course of his obedience unto death for our redemption, he cheerfully met his sufferings, submitting to all that shame, insult, pain, and agony, which he endured from his wicked persecutors; see *Matt. xxvi. 67. xxvii. 26. Mark, xiv. 65. John, xviii. 22.* *Note;* The more we consider

what Jesus so readily submitted to on our behalf, the more shall our hearts be comforted in the persuasion of his willingness to save all who come to him.

3. Powerfully supported, and boldly accomplishing his work in the face of all opposition. *For the Lord will help me;* as man, he needed support from his Father, and found it in the day of his calamity; *therefore shall I not be confounded,* so as to faint under his sufferings. *Therefore have I set my face like a flint,* against all the ignominious treatment to which he was exposed; *and I know that I shall not be ashamed;* his cause was good, and he was assured that in the issue he should not be disappointed, but see the redemption of all his faithful people completed. *He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? Let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me.* The charges that were laid against him by Satan, or by his malicious persecutors, were all answered; and God, by his resurrection from the dead, declared him fully acquitted of every accusation, and that he had made complete satisfaction for the sins of the world. Thus holpen of God, no condemnation remained against him; whilst all his enemies, doomed to ruin, like a moth-eaten garment, should utterly and irrecoverably perish. *Note;* (1.) They who are called to stand up for Christ, have need of courage, and to set their faces as a flint against the revilings of men. (2.) Christ's service will bear us out; and, however shameful in the eyes of men the preaching of the cross may appear, it is our greatest glory. (3.) While our hearts are led up to God for strength, he will not fail us. (4.) A believer in Jesus may now challenge every accuser; the resurrection of his Lord gives him a plea which silences all condemnation. (5.) The enemies of Christ and his people, however they may prevail for a time, are doomed at last to perish for ever, and the worm which dieth not shall feed upon them.

3dly, The sufficiency of the Lord Jesus for his undertaking being shewn, he here addresses saints and sinners, comforting the one, and warning the other.

1. He speaks a word of kind encouragement to sincere penitents. Their character is drawn as fearing *the Lord,* with reverence and regard, and obeying *the voice of his servant;* yet they walk in darkness, and see no light; exposed to severe afflictions, or destitute of their comfort, and full of fears and doubts about their interest in the Redeemer. In such a state of distress he bids them *trust in the name of the Lord,* against hope believing in hope; and staying themselves on their God, who, though they are in darkness, is willing to reveal himself to them. *Note;* In the darkest dispensations of Providence there is still ground to say, *My God;* and as long as our faith do not fail, we shall not be cast away.

2. He speaks a word of conviction to the presumptuous. *Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks;* like Nadab and Abihu offering strange fire, setting up the light of nature instead of revelation; seeking, by works of righteousness which they can do, to obtain pardon from God, instead of renouncing themselves, to trust alone in the infinite merit of a Redeemer. *Walk*

in

## C H A P. LI.

*An exhortation, after the pattern of Abraham, to trust in Christ, by reason of his comfortable promises, of his righteous salvation, and man's mortality. Christ, by his sanctified arm, defendeth his people from the fear of man: he bewaileth the afflictions of Jerusalem, and promiseth deliverance.*

[Before Christ 712.]

**H**EARKEN to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock *whence* ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit *whence* ye are digged.

2 Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah *that* bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.

3 For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert

*in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled; ironically spoken, as intimating the vanity and insufficiency of the methods they pursued: this shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow. The issue of your ways will be fatal: the light of nature can only lead you to outer darkness, and dependence on your own deserts and duties prove at last your eternal ruin. Note; Creature-comforts may administer a short-lived enjoyment, and self-dependence flatter us with a momentary hope; but soon will these sparks be extinguished, and death undeceive those who would not be undeceived before.*

## C H A P. LI.

**T**HE second section of this discourse, containing the Messiah's consolation of his church, is divided into two parts. The first part contains a general consolation; the foundation whereof is laid in the origin of their nation, in Abraham and Sarah; ver. 1—3. The latter part contains a particular consolation; drawn, *first*, from the calling of the Gentiles, to be enlightened with the doctrine of the Messiah, ver. 4, 5; *secondly*, from the abolition of the old œconomy, and the firm duration of the new, ver. 6; *thirdly*, from the weakness and destruction of the enemies opposing the church, *first*, Jews, ver. 7, 8; *secondly*, Gentiles, and particularly the Romans; which should end in the foundation of the new œconomy, ver. 12—16. An apostrophe of a chorus of believers is inserted in the midst, ver. 9—11. wherein they pray that the Messiah would exert the same power in procuring for his church the inheritance of the world, which he had formerly exerted in delivering it from Egypt, and procuring for it the inheritance of Canaan.

*Ver. 1, 2. Hearken to me, &c.]* The Messiah, about to comfort the true church remaining in the land of Judea, which consisted of a small number, called by him a little flock, and whom he had just before marked out as a small company *fearing the Lord*,—begins with a gracious

like the garden of the LORD: joy and gladness shall be found therein; thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

4 ¶ Hearken unto me, my people: and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgement to rest for a light of the people.

5 My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust.

6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.

*address, calling them a company following after righteousness, seeking Jehovah, and demanding attention from them. He orders them to look to Abraham and Sarah, from whom they derived their original, who alone being called by God to enjoy the blessings of a new and higher dispensation, were increased by his remarkable blessing, and multiplied into an immense number; that they might understand hereby, that they, the true heirs of the blessing of Abraham, should enjoy the same privilege of the divine blessing: and this foundation of comfort being laid down, ver. 1, 2. he immediately explains the purpose of the divine grace, whereby it was determined to place the church, formed of this seed, in a happy and prosperous state, abounding with all the goods of divine grace and true consolation, that they might exhibit a type of the blessing of Abraham and Sarah, ver. 3. The reader will easily discern that the third verse is figurative: in its primary sense referring to the state of Sion, after the restoration from Babylon; in its secondary and spiritual sense, to the redemption of the church by the Messiah, and the consequent blessings of grace. See chap. xlix. 19. lii. 9.*

*Ver. 4, 5. Hearken, &c.]* The prophet, continuing the discourse of the Messiah, explains particularly what he had expressed in general, and shews that the first benefit prepared for the comfort of the afflicted church is, the faith of the Gentiles, who were to be brought by the doctrine of the Gospel to the knowledge and worship of the true God; which is the sum and argument of these verses. See chap. xlii. 4—6. *Vitringa*, instead of, *I will make my judgment to rest, &c.* reads, *I will set my judgment, &c. Mine arms shall judge the people*, refers to that vengeance which should accompany the establishment of the Gospel, and which was particularly visible in the punishment of the Jewish nation, when they were rejected, and the Gentiles chosen in their stead.

*Ver. 6. Lift up your eyes, &c.]* The prophet here, as a second argument of consolation, foretels the abolition of the

7 ¶ Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart *is* my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.

8. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment; and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.

9 ¶ Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. *Art* thou not it that hath cut Rahab, *and* wounded the dragon?

10 *Art* thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?

11 Therefore the redeemed of the LORD

shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; *and* sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

12 ¶ I, *even* I, *am* he that comforteth you: who *art* thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man *that* shall die, and of the son of man *which* shall be made as grass;

13 And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where *is* the fury of the oppressor?

14 The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail.

15 But I *am* the LORD thy God, that di-

the old œconomy, and the establishment of the new. He speaks of the old œconomy, or politico-ecclesiastical, under the figurative ideas of heaven and earth, so usual with the prophets, which are supposed to vanish and be destroyed, with all their inhabitants, while a new heaven, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, under the œconomy of the Messiah, is here said to be established. See Vitringa. Instead of, *shall die in like manner*, we may read, *shall die like an insect or a worm*.

Ver. 9—11. *Awake, &c.*] *Rouse, rouse, &c.* *Rouse,—art thou not that which bowed down Egypt, which mortally wounded the crocodile or dragon? Ver. 11. And the redeemed, &c. upon their head: joy and gladness shall attend them: sorrow and sighing shall flee away.* Thus far the Messiah had addressed his believing people; but here the Holy Spirit exhibited to the prophet, according to the series of times and things, a fearful struggle of the church with the Roman empire, to continue a long time before the people of God should be entirely delivered from it: the Holy Spirit shews him in figure this spiritual Egypt in all its strength and power, with the Red Sea like a fortification opposing the church; that is, with the sanguinary persecutions which the saints were to undergo. About to console the church against this evil, (which consolation begins at the 12th verse,) a chorus of believers is here introduced, entreating God, that, as formerly, for the deliverance of his people from Egyptian bondage, he had given specimens of his power and justice in the destruction of his enemies and the salvation of his people; so now, at this time, he would exert his omnipotence, in destroying the spiritual *Egypt* of the Roman empire, and its power, and in drying this *Red Sea*; that is, in stopping the violence of those sanguinary persecutions, by which this empire defended its religious errors: to this votive apostrophe, contained in the 9th and 10th verses, an answer is adapted, ver. 11. teaching that God consented to the wishes of his

saints, and would take care by his providence that his church should at length be placed in such a state, as to be able to enjoy the communion of his faith with the utmost liberty, security, and gladness. There can be nothing more sublime and elegant than the apostrophe in these verses.

Ver. 12—16. *I, even I, am he that comforteth, &c.*] The apostrophe being finished, wherein the foundation of this consolation was laid; the thread of the discourse is resumed, and the consolation is continued, which seems more properly to belong to the Father in this place than to the Son; and the sum of the discourse is, to fortify the people of God against the fears and dangers threatened by the adversaries of the true religion, and the princes and chief of those adversaries, who endeavoured by every method to draw the confessors of the true religion from the faith, or at least by threats of the most grievous punishments, to draw them to a public denial of their faith. Vitringa renders the 14th verse, *The captive exile shall soon be loosed; and he shall not die in the pit, neither shall his bread fail.* That is, “When the fury of the oppressor, and the tyrannical persecutions spoken of in the preceding verses, are over, the persecuted and afflicted shall soon enjoy their liberty, and the consequences of it.” The meaning of the next two verses is this: that all the greater commotions which are raised in the world, some of them immediately in opposition to the church of God; and, as it seems, about to overwhelm it, are subject to the Divine Power, and are appeased according to his wisdom and good pleasure: but, in the mean time, he takes, and will always take, such care of his church and its teachers, that, covered by his counsel and providence, they may be preserved to perfect the great work of the new œconomy, prepared and designed for his glory. *I have put my words in thy mouth*, ver. 16, refers primarily to Christ, and secondly to Christ’s mystical body; and therein to the pastors

vided the sea, whose waves roared : The LORD of Hosts *is* his name.

16 And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou *art* my people.

17 ¶ Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury ; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung *them* out.

18 *There is* none to guide her among all

the sons *whom* she hath brought forth ; neither *is there any* that taketh her by the hand, of all the sons *that* she hath brought up.

19 These two *things* are come unto thee : who shall be sorry for thee ? desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword : by whom shall I comfort thee ?

20 Thy sons have fainted : they lie at the head of all the streets, as a wild bull in a net : they are full of the fury of the LORD, the rebuke of thy God.

21 ¶ Therefore hear now this, thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine :

tors and teachers. See chap. lix. 21. *Planting the heavens, and laying the foundations of the earth,* refers to the same idea with that in ver. 6. The meaning is, perfecting the work of the new œconomy. See chap. lxxv. 17. lxxvi. 22. and Vitringa.

Ver. 17.] From hence to the 61st chapter, follows the third and most extensive discourse, in which the state of the church, from the times of the Maccabees, but particularly of Jesus Christ and his kingdom, is foretold, to the end of the world ; yet so, that in describing the corrupt times of the church, (which is done in chapters lvi. lvii. lviii.) the depraved state of the church, which preceded the times of the Maccabees, is alluded to, and the phrases frequently taken from thence. The whole discourse may be divided into nine sections. The *first*, which is preparatory, is contained in ch. li. 17. and ch. lii. The *second* in ch. liii. ; the *third* in ch. liv. ; the *fourth* in ch. lv. ; the *fifth* in lvi. ; the *sixth* in lvii. ; the *seventh* in lviii. lix. 15. ; the *eighth* in lix. 16 - 21. ; the *ninth* in ch. lx. The occasion of the prophesy is taken from the preceding discourse, ch. xlix. 1. wherein the mystery of the humiliation of the Messiah, his exaltation, and the calling of the Gentiles, being proposed, it seemed good to the Holy Spirit to take this occasion to speak of that mystery more at large ; for it was of consequence to the church to have the events of the new œconomy described, as in a picture, from its first beginning to its consummation ; particularly to have clearly set forth, and preserved in the treasures of the prophetic word, the doctrine concerning the most bitter passion of the Messiah, the grand foundation of salvation, that there might not be left any objection for incredulity. This section may be divided into four parts, according to the four scenical periods observable in it. The first apostrophe is directed to the church, wherein it is commanded to raise itself up from its state of affliction ; and here, *first*, the afflictions which the church had sustained are enumerated, ver. 17, —20 ; *secondly*, deliverance is promised from these evils, and revenge upon her enemies, ver. 21—23. The second apostrophe is directed to the same church, about the time of the approach of the Messiah's kingdom ; wherein she is ordered to put on dregs, to adorn herself agreeably to the state of an œconomy of grace and liberty, ch. lii. 1, 2. *Secondly*, the occasion of that exhortation or command is

delivered ; namely, the approaching redemption of the church, ver. 3. *Thirdly*, the reason of that command, and of the necessity of redemption, is explained from the condition of the church, detained a long time in captivity and servitude, corporal as well as spiritual, but now to be delivered by their God present with them, ver. 4—6. Next follows an exclamation of a prophetic or evangelical chorus ; wherein is set forth the greatness and excellence of the blessing of the Gospel, to be promulgated through the whole world, by preachers appointed for that purpose : and here we have the exclamation itself, ver. 7, 8. and an address to the renewed church, exhorting it to joy on account of this benefit, ver. 9, 10. The third apostrophe is directed to the preachers of the Gospel ; wherein, *first*, they are animated and excited to undertake this expedition, and are instructed concerning the manner of undertaking it, ver. 11, 12. ; *secondly*, the basis and foundation of the kingdom of God, to be established among the Jews and Gentiles, is laid down ; namely, the obedience unto death of the Messiah to his Father amidst the greatest sufferings, and the exaltation which should follow it, ver. 13—15.

Ver. 17—20. *Awake, &c.*] *Rouse, rouse,—cup of reeling, and drained them out :* ver. 18. *There is none to lead her along among all the sons, &c. :* ver. 19. *These two things are come unto thee, (who can sufficiently lament thee ?) desolation and destruction ; even famine and sword : How shall I comfort thee !* Ver. 20. *Thy sons have fainted away : they lie, &c. as a stag in a net.* Vitringa supposes that the ancient church, delivered from the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, and which was in immediate expectation of the kingdom of the Messiah, is here addressed. He describes this church figuratively, as intoxicated to the highest degree of stupidity by her enemies ; compelled to drink the very dregs of the cup, that none of the wine might be lost ; and at last left, more like a dead person than a living one, in the street, to be trodden upon by all, and her very sons, by whom she ought to be carried home, and refreshed with water, lying drunken also in the street, ver. 20. It is very plain that the Christian church cannot be here addressed, because the afflictions here specified were those of anger and punishment. See Acts, ii. 13, 15.

Ver. 21—23. *Therefore hear now, &c.*] To the church, lying in the condition above described, but soon to rise, soon

22 Thus faith thy Lord the LORD, and thy God *that* pleadeth the cause of his people: Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the

cup of trembling, *even* the dregs of the cup of my fury: thou shalt no more drink it again:

soon to emerge from her afflictions, to be avenged of her enemies, and to be clothed with honour, the consolation in these verses is addressed, which have nothing difficult in them. We may just observe, that the horrid image in this whole apostrophe is worked up with all the colourings of terror, and this allusion to the vice of drunkenness is frequent in Scripture: the following passages will throw light on our prophet: Jer. xxx. 8, 11. Joel, ii. 19. Amos, ix. 14. We may read ver. 22. *The cup of reeling or the intoxicating cup:—Thou shalt no longer drink of it.* Last clause of ver. 23. *And as the street to the passengers.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, This chapter may be considered in one sense as intended for the comfort of Israel in Babylon, but in its grand and more important sense refers to the Gospel dispensation.

1. The character of God's people is here described. *Ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord; who earnestly embrace the righteousness of faith, seek the Lord in all his appointed ordinances, and desire to walk before him in all holy conversation and godliness.*

2. Their duty is set before them: in general, to hearken to all God's words, and particularly to look back with humility on their low original, and with faith to trust God in the time of their deepest distress, who is as able to save them, and increase his church, as to deliver Abraham from his idolatrous country, and make him the father of many nations. *Note;* (1.) It is good for a child of God to be often remembering the hole of the pit, the state of nature and sin whence he hath been digged, to keep him ever humble before God. (2.) What God hath done of old for those who trusted, as Abraham, implicitly on his promise, should encourage us to follow their faith, and to hope for their blessing.

3. In the way of duty God will meet them with his consolations. *The Lord shall comfort Zion, his church, and every member of it, with the discoveries of his love. He will comfort all her waste places, where, through the ravages of persecution, few faithful remained; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; so flourishing and fruitful; and this will yield matter of abundant consolation to the saints, as well as glory to God: joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.* *Note;* (1.) It is matter of greatest joy to the soul, when God is pleased to change its desert state of nature, and, by his grace renewed, to make it flourish as the garden of Eden. (2.) The tribute of praise is the least we can render for the mercies that we continually receive from God.

2dly, God promises to comfort his church, and we have here abundant ground of consolation set before us, from the views of the transcendent glory of God our Saviour.

1. We are told who they are that have an interest in him: *My people, my nation,* that generation of faithful Jews and Gentiles incorporated, that make one body, of which

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Christ is the living head; *ye that know righteousness, in whose heart is my law; faith working by love, and engaging a willing obedience to all God's commandments.* Reader, is this thy case?

2. A repeated and solemn call is given to these, to hear him who speaketh from heaven, and brings to men the knowledge of salvation. *Note;* They who would know God's mind and will, must be attentive to his word.

3. The glad tidings that Christ brings are delivered. [1.] *A law shall proceed from me, the law of the Spirit of Life, the Gospel; and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people;* his word shall gain a firm establishment, and be not merely the light of Israel, but of the ends of the earth.

[2.] In this Gospel, one grand object is the great atonement wrought out by the Redeemer in behalf of fallen man—the meritorious cause of the salvation, which is, in consequence thereof, bestowed upon them that believe.

[3.] This atonement is *near*, and this *salvation is gone forth*; openly preached in the word of the Gospel, and is near to every sinner, from whom no previous qualifications are required, except a consciousness of guilt—when ever he receives God's record as true, that moment he becomes entitled to the salvation promised.

[4.] *Mine arm shall judge the people;* either the arm of the Lord shall be revealed to them in mercy, and they shall trust in it, as will be the case of those who embrace the proffered salvation; or he will visit those who neglect so great a mercy, and punish them for their unbelief.

[5.] This atoning merit of the Redeemer shall be eternal: it is not only free for all nations, but enduring through all ages. The heavens will decay, and the earth be destroyed, but this will abide unchangeably the same.

[6.] They need not fear the reproaches and revilings of men, who have an interest in this infinite merit and this salvation: they are to expect their cross; but it is their glory, not their shame.

[7.] Christ will silence and destroy shortly all their enemies; and when, through the ages of eternity, his glorified saints shall be rejoicing in consummate bliss, they who have rejected it must lie down in torment, where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched.

3dly, God had promised to bring near his salvation; the church immediately in prayer cries to him to hasten it in his time.

1. His people pray that he would awake, and put forth his mighty power for their salvation: not that he ever sleeps or slumbers; but, when the faithful are diminished and brought low, he seems to forget their distresses. *Confident of his power,* they plead their former experience of it, when in the plagues of Egypt he made bare his arm, and, in the deliverance of Israel from that house of their prison, wrought such miracles on their behalf. *Confident of his*

4 U

love,

23 But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee; which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over: and thou

hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over.

love, they promise themselves a speedy answer; that he will bring them to Zion with songs, banish their sorrows, and crown them with everlasting joy. This may refer to the restoration of the Jews from Babylon, or the church of Christ, when Babylon mystical is fallen. And it is applicable to every faithful soul, which here, beset with enemies, is driven to God in continual prayer for help and succour, through grace is enabled to triumph over all difficulties, and in death goes to the heavenly Zion, where all the tears of the saints will be for ever wiped away, their sorrows be eternally banished, and joy unspeakable and full of glory glow in their bosom; while amid the enraptured hosts of saints and angels they join in the everlasting songs of a Redeemer's praise.

2. God, whose ears are ever open to the prayers of his people, answers them to their utmost satisfaction: *I, even I, am he that comforteth you*; and when he, who is the fountain of mercy, and the God of all consolation, gives such an assurance, what can we need more?

[1.] He comforts them under their fears. *Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die?* &c. However the oppressors threatened, the greatest before God were but dying worms, and frail as the withering grass; and therefore their continual fears were groundless and unreasonable; nay, they were dishonourable to God, and shewed a forgetfulness and distrust of his almighty power and grace. *Note*; (1.) A sense of the vanity of man will greatly tend to deliver us from the fear of offending in the way of our duty; for what is the wrath of a dying worm, compared with the favour of the living God? (2.) We often create ourselves needless disquiet, and tremble at consequences and events which never come to pass. (3.) The causes of all tormenting fear is our unbelief. One thought of God, with fixed dependence upon him, would bear us above all frowns and threatenings.

[2.] He will loose them from their bonds. *The captive exiles hasteneth that he may be loosed*: it is a natural desire, and he is solicitous for the time to come; and that he should not die in the pit, the house of his prison; nor that his bread should fail, and he die with hunger. And such might be the fear of some of the Jews in Babylon, and is the case of timid believers at times, when under temptation they are ready to despair of themselves; but *I am the Lord thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared*; as when he once opened a way for his ransomed to escape out of Egypt, so will he from Babylon; and thus shall all his captive exiles, all faithful souls, be set free, whatever spiritual bondage for a time they may endure: *the Lord of Hosts is his name*, and therefore able to accomplish all his promises.

[3.] He will fulfil his word to the uttermost in the establishment of his church. *I have put my words in thy mouth*; Christ, the great prophet, being authorized and sent of the Father to publish the Gospel: *and have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand*; protected him, and his ministers commissioned by him to preach his word, with whom God is to the end of the world, maintaining them

against all opposition; *that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth*; the Gospel church, bright as the heavens in purity of doctrine and worship; and strong as the foundations of the earth, against which the gates of hell can never prevail: *and say unto Zion, Thou art my people*; the spiritual Zion, where Jews and Gentiles, all the faithful, incorporated together, become one fold under one shepherd.

4thly, Jerusalem here appears sunk under her calamities into the stupor of despair; or, like Ezekiel's dry bones, in a state of death.

1. God calls aloud, *Awake, Awake!* and his voice can raise the dead, and rouse the soul from the depths of despair. Deplorable indeed was her case: for grievous provocations she had been made to drink the cup of fury and trembling to the dregs. Most awful judgments had been poured upon her, and like one intoxicated with wine, weak and feeble, she became an easy prey to the invader. None of all her sons was able to help or support her; king, priest, and prophet had failed. Two things had come upon her, a state of abject misery, and not a friend to comfort her. Famine, desolation, destruction, and the sword, had cut off all ranks, and the few who were left, though despairing, were furious; though fainting with hunger, impatient under God's rebukes, and quarrelling with his providences, instead of meekly humbling themselves for their sins. *Note*; (1.) If judgment thus begin at the house of God, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear? (2.) When we have been unfaithful to God, let it not be thought strange, if our nearest relatives prove unfaithful to us. (3.) None can comfort the soul against which God rises up in displeasure. (4.) Too many under God's visitations, instead of being abashed by them, madly quarrel with his providences. (5.) They but entangle themselves the more, and add to their plagues, who struggle in his net.

2. God's compassions toward them are still manifested: though they deserve wrath to the uttermost, in the midst of judgment he remembers mercy. *Therefore hear now this, thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine*; stupified with the weight of calamities, and an object of God's pity. *Thus saith thy Lord the Lord, and thy God*, who, notwithstanding all provocations, hath not utterly cast them off; *that pleadeth the cause of his people*, to the confusion of their enemies; *Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury*; the punishment inflicted is enough; *thou shalt no more drink it again*; the sin forgiven, the curse shall be removed; and *I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee*; of the Babylonian, and, in future time, of Babylon mystical; *which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over*; not only enslaving their bodies, but tyrannizing over the souls of men, the distinguishing mark of the antichristian church, who set up an infallible head, and require implicit obedience: *and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street to them that went over*; reduced to the most abject state of distress, see Rev. xi. 2.; but now the time is come to vindicate



C H A P. LII.

*Christ persuadeth the church to believe his free redemption, to receive the ministers thereof, to join in the power thereof, and to free themselves from bondage. Christ's kingdom shall be exalted.*

[Before Christ 719.]

**A** WAKE, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.

2 Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.

3 For thus saith the LORD: Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money.

4 For thus saith the Lord God: My people

went down aforetime into Egypt, to sojourn there; and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause.

5 Now, therefore, what have I here, saith the LORD, that my people is taken away for nought? they that rule over them make them to howl, saith the LORD; and my name continually every day is blasphemed.

6 Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore *they shall know* in that day that I *am* he that doth speak: behold, *it is I*.

7 ¶ How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

8 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion.

vindicate their quarrel, and execute judgment on their oppressors. *Note;* (1.) It is often the case of God's people to be in tribulation. (2.) However the cause of godliness may be oppressed, it will appear triumphant at the last. (3.) They who have been persecutors of God's people, will find him the avenger of their wrongs.

C H A P. LII.

*Ver. 1, 2. Awake, &c.]* This second apostrophe is again directed to the church, about the time of the manifestation of the kingdom of God. The prophet, by the Spirit, beholds this church, heretofore brought out of Egypt, and delivered from the Assyrians, again, to its great grief, mixed with the profane and impure multitude, by whose means the *name of God was daily blasphemed*, ver. 5. He commands her, therefore, to lay aside her *old dress*, which was suitable to the ancient dispensation, and to assume a new and spiritual one, as being now about to enter upon that state and oeconomy, which should exclude the hypocrite and profane. The metaphor is taken from a virgin, or any woman in distress, to whom, sitting as a captive, amidst grief and defilement, her bridegroom or husband being absent, news of immediate deliverance are brought, and of the change of her present condition for the better; wherein, united to her husband, she should enjoy all the prosperity that she desired; and who for that purpose is ordered to dress and adorn herself agreeably to this state. By the *uncircumcised* and the *unclean*, are to be understood, in a mystical sense, the impure in heart and work. See 2 Cor. vii. 1. Rev. xxi. 28.

*Ver. 3—6. For thus saith the Lord]* In the third verse, which sets forth the true redemption of the church of Christ, we have the foundation of the preceding exhortation; of which this redemption was the true and proper cause. When the time of redemption was at hand, it

became the church to assume the dress proper for that season, and to assert its liberty. The meaning of the expression, *Ye have sold yourselves for nought*, is, "Ye have been delivered into the power of those who have heretofore held you in slavery, without any price paid to me;" and, *Ye shall be redeemed without money*, means, "Ye shall be redeemed without any price paid by you." This whole redemption shall be my work, and the effect of my mere grace and favour." The prophet proceeds to a fuller explication of the command, and of the necessity of the redemption, from the condition of the people with respect to the preceding time, ver. 4. and the present time, ver. 5. The fourth verse is elliptical, and should be thus supplied; "At the beginning my people went down into Egypt, not to possess that country, but to sojourn in it; and there they were unjustly oppressed, and delivered from thence by me with a stretched-out arm." Again, "The Assyrian oppressed them for nothing, that is, without any just cause; only incited thereto by the desire of rule: nor was I then wanting to my people, but procured them deliverance. Therefore, when now I see them again oppressed, and that by their own rulers, and brought into spiritual servitude with the blasphemy of my name, ver. 5. shall I desert them? They shall know my name, ver. 6. They shall have the clearest revelation of my power, they shall know that I am God their Redeemer." See John, viii. 24.

*Ver. 7, 8. How beautiful, &c.]* While the Son of God manifested himself in the flesh to his people, the prophet, immediately rapt into ecstasy, beholds first the evangelists, chosen by the Lord throughout Judæa; then the apostles, and their contemporaries, departing by the Lord's command from Jerusalem; announcing throughout the whole world, by the preaching of the Gospel, the good tidings of salvation prepared for all people without distinction,

9 ¶ Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.

10 The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

11 ¶ Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD.

12 For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward.

13 ¶ Behold, my servant shall deal prudently; he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.

14 As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:

15 So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for

and inviting them to a participation of this salvation. It is impossible to apply these words to any other than the first preachers of the Gospel, without wresting them in the strongest manner possible: *Ευαγγελιον*, the *Gospel*, is, literally, *good tidings*. See Luke, ii. 10. Vitringa renders the eighth verse, *The voice of the watchmen, they lift up the voice; together do they sing; or they sing in concert. For men shall see with both eyes, when the Lord shall have restored Zion.* Vitringa supposes that the watchmen here mean the prophets, who answer to, or sing in concert with the evangelists; for between these there is the utmost harmony; so that what the prophets have foretold as to be fulfilled, the evangelists relate as fulfilled. Believers therefore, in the voice of the evangelists, acknowledge the words of the prophet.

Ver. 9, 10. *Break forth into joy*] See chap. xlv. 23. xlix. 13. The figure here used is single, designed to set forth the greatness and excellence of the benefit of redemption. This address first animates the restored church to celebrate the divine praises with its utmost power; and secondly sets forth the reason of this exhortation, drawn from the greatness of the benefit, which is proposed in the middle of the ninth verse, and more largely set forth in the 10th. By *the arm of the Lord*, we are to understand the divine power, particularly as discernible in the establishment and wonderful progress of the Gospel. By *the waste places of Jerusalem*, the prophet means the church as in its state of desolation, just before the time, here alluded to, of its restoration and deliverance.

Ver. 11, 12. *Depart ye, &c.*] They who compose the true church are set forth in this apostrophe, as in the communion of a certain polluted people and state. They are commanded to separate themselves from this people and its communion, and, being properly purified, to depart thence upon a certain expedition, to be undertaken with mature and deliberate counsel, under the care and protection of the divine providence. This office is especially imposed upon the sacred persons, who are here called those that bear the vessels of the Lord. The highest hope of success in their expedition is given them from their leader, Jehovah. The apostles and evangelists are here addressed, who were to depart from spiritual servitude, from every defilement of the world and the flesh, and to go forth and preach the glad tidings of salvation through Christ. The expressions seem to allude to the departure from

Egypt. The meaning of the passage in the 12th verse, *For ye shall not go out with haste, &c.* is, that they should not undertake this expedition in an inconsiderate, tumultuous, and fearful manner. See Deut. xvi. 3. and Vitringa.

Ver. 13—15. *Behold, my servant shall deal prudently.*] The prophet having proceeded thus far in setting forth the redemption designed for true believers, and the manner and means of manifesting this great work, as well as the success of it, in the conversion of the Gentiles; he now introduces God the Father declaring the foundation and cause of what had been already foretold; namely, the obedience paid by the Messiah to the Father in extreme humiliation, and in its subsequent glorious exaltation:—to the end of this chapter. This argument being of the greatest importance, and containing a doctrine absolutely necessary to faith in Christ Jesus as the Messiah, Isaiah treats of this mystery more as an evangelist than as a prophet, and explains it in the fullest and clearest manner in the following sections; which are so connected with the present period as to contain the elucidation, confirmation, and more complete detail of it. Many commentators join these three verses with the following chapter, the whole of which the ancient Jews have applied to the Messiah, though they would not acknowledge in our Jesus those characters which we discern so manifestly in him from this prophecy. The Chaldee, instead of *servant*, ver. 13. reads, *the Messiah*. The word יַשְׁכִּיל *yaskiil*, translated *shall deal prudently*, is rendered both by Vitringa and Bishop Chandler, *shall prosper, or go on prosperously*. See Jer. xxiii. 5. The bishop paraphrases the three verses thus: “Behold the “Messiah, my servant, who comes to do my will, and “therefore appears in the form of my servant, he shall at “the last go on prosperously; he shall be exalted in his “kingdom, and appear in majesty, honour, and power, “far above the greatest earthly potentate, ver. 14. This “exaltation is a just reward of his abasement, which was “lower than that of the lowest man. As many shall be “struck with wonder and despondency at his mean, inglorious appearance, whom they expected to find in the “form of the kings of the earth; ver. 15. so he, in his “turn, shall sprinkle many nations with astonishment at “his advancement, and the surprising instances he shall “give of his authority and power, and thereupon they “shall become his disciples by baptism. Out of respect “or fear of him, Gentile kings shall keep silence; and “they

*that* which had not been told them shall heard shall they consider. they see; and *that* which they had not

“ they to whom no prophets were sent, nor promises made of a Saviour, shall consider and receive his doctrine when it shall be preached to them, and confirmed by miracles and other extraordinary demonstrations of divine power.” The Hebrew word *זָרַק* *iazzeb*, rendered *sprinkle*, has properly that signification. See Levit. xiv. 16. 51. Numb. viii. 7. and to the Messiah is promised to *sprinkle with clean water*, &c. Ezek. xxxvi. 25. From hence it is used for *to surprise and astonish*, as people are who have much water thrown upon them; and this sense is followed by the LXX. The Jews, who asked John, (ch. i. 25.) why he baptized, if he were not the Christ? plainly shew that they understood this text as indicating one of the offices of the Messiah; which was, to *sprinkle with water*, or *baptize*. See 1 Pet. i. 2. Heb. x: 22. xii. 24. and Bishop Chandler’s Defence, p. 147.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, By an elegant figure Jerusalem is here described as a mourner in the most abject distress, sitting in the dust, stripped of every ornament, wasted with sorrow, and ready to sleep the sleep of death. And herein she is the figure of the church, under the prevalence of antichrist, when the power of true religion is reduced to the lowest ebb. In this afflicted state,

1. God awakens her with his calls; bids her arise, and shake herself from the dust; put on her beautiful garments, recover her decayed strength, and loose the captive bands from her neck; and what he commands, he will enable his faithful followers to perform. *Note*: When the calls of Gospel grace reach the sinner, he is the deplorable captive of sin, stripped of all righteousness and strength, and doomed to the dust of death and hell; but, awakened by the voice of God, the beautiful garments of salvation are provided for him, strength ministered to break the bands of sin; and, rising from the dust of spiritual death, he sits down among the living saints of God.

2. He promises to preserve her from the future power of her enemies. *For, henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised, and the unclean*; which can only agree with Jerusalem mystical, the church of God in the latter day, see Rev. xxi. 27. since Jerusalem, after the return from the captivity, was profaned by Antiochus and the Romans, and is possessed by the Turks at this day.

3. God will redeem his faithful Israel freely. *Ye have sold yourselves for nought*; for, whatever pleasure and enjoyment sin promises, misery and vanity are found the only fruits of it: *and ye shall be redeemed without money*; corruptible things, such as silver and gold, were of no avail to redeem the soul, but the precious blood of Christ alone; and, though the purchase was dearly made by him, yet the salvation obtained by his blood-shedding comes to us entirely free, without money and without price.

4. The Lord will magnify his own glory in the deliverance of his people from the antichristian bondage, as he did of old from the prison of Egypt, when the Jews, who went to sojourn there, were oppressed; and as he

rescued them from the yoke of the Assyrians, who unreasonably and cruelly afflicted them. God’s glory suffered while they were enslaved: tyrannically treated, they howled for anguish, and their proud masters, far from acknowledging God in their conquests, blasphemed his name, as if unable to deliver his people. *Therefore* he will make his glory appear, and his people shall know his salvation, and acknowledge, in the day of their deliverance, the faithfulness of God in his promises. Thus when Babylon mystical is fallen, then Jesus will be especially adored by his saints, as the faithful and true witness.

2dly, Great was the joy which Cyrus’s proclamation occasioned, and happy were the Jews to spread the report; but the apostle, Rom. x. 15. plainly intimates, that a greater cause of joy is here signified, even the coming of Christ, and the preaching of his Gospel, to which these words are to be referred.

1. A blessed messenger is sent publishing the happiest tidings that ever greeted mortal ear. Some refer this to John the Baptist, but it should rather be applied to the Redeemer himself and his apostles. The tidings they bring are *tidings of peace, tidings of good things, tidings of salvation*; pardon of sin obtained, God’s favour restored, victory over our spiritual foes, deliverance from the bondage of corruption; and, above all, our *God reigneth*; Jesus is risen, is ascended up on high, hath led captivity captive, sits on the throne of glory to bless, preserve, protect his believing people, and to bring those who faithfully cleave to him to be with him, where he is, that they may behold his glory. These are the tidings published in the mountains publicly, and beautiful are the feet of those who bring them, worthy to be had in honour for their works’ sake.

2. With greatest joy the message is received. *Thy watchmen*, the ministers of the Gospel, *shall lift up the voice*, and publish aloud the glad news which is arrived of pardon, peace, and salvation through Jesus. *With the voice together shall they sing*; with delight and joy shall they execute their ministry: *for they shall see eye to eye*, clearly and distinctly, the great truths which they are authorized to proclaim, to as to have the fullest conviction of them in their own souls, *when the Lord shall bring again Zion*, revive his work, enlarge his church, and, by an abundant out-pouring of his Spirit in the latter day, call in Jews as well as Gentiles to the communion of his saints.

3. The waste places of Jerusalem are called upon to rejoice and sing for this great and general redemption. Long had desolations been spread around, but now God will build up her breaches. *For the Lord hath comforted his people*, with the discoveries of his rich grace in the Gospel of his Son; *he hath redeemed Jerusalem*, his church, his faithful people, by the offering of the body of Jesus once for all. *The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations*: displayed his power and holiness in the work of the Redeemer; *and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God*, manifest in the flesh, whose redemption is general, not confined to one nation or people, but free for all; whosoever will, may come and partake of it.

*Note*,

## C H A P. LIII.

*The prophet, complaining of incredulity, excuseth the scandal of the cross, by the benefit of Christ's passion, and the good success thereof.*

[Before Christ 719.]

**W**HO hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?

*Note.* The subject of redeeming love will afford matter for praise that never will be exhausted.

4. An instant and urgent command is given to *depart*, and the Lord himself promises to be *their re-reward*, that their march may be safe and uninterrupted. This may in some sense refer to the return from Babylon, but is applied by the apostle, 2 Cor. vi. 17. to the separation from sin and idolatry, which, by the preaching of the Gospel, would be effected in the Gentile world. *Depart ye, depart ye; make no delay: go ye out from thence, from the kingdom of darkness: touch no unclean thing; keep back no allowed sin, nor have fellowship with the workers of iniquity: go ye out of the midst of her, of Babylon, or rather the house of Satan's bondage; be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord; not merely be ceremonially clean, ye Jewish priests, who bear the vessels of the sanctuary which Cyrus restored. It belongs rather to Gospel ministers, whose purity of life must adorn the doctrines they preach; or to every Christian who is consecrated a priest unto God, and keeps himself pure in his ordinances and worship. For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight, but openly, and boldly casting off the yoke of sin, and asserting their glorious liberty wherewith Christ had made them free; for the Lord will go before you, as in the pillar of fire of old, to guide and lead you safe from every danger; and the God of Israel will be your re-reward, to guard them every way against Satan's power and wiles. May we trust in him, and cheerfully and steadily hold on, and hold out!*

3dly, The three last verses of this chapter, together with the following chapter, set forth the person, offices, humiliation, and exaltation of the Lord Christ, and may justly be reckoned among the clearest prophecies of the sufferings of the Son of God, and of the glory which should follow.

1. God points him out to our notice and regard. *Behold! my servant*, appointed and commissioned for the work of redemption, and fully qualified for it; he shall deal prudently, with unerring wisdom ordering all his ways: or, he shall prosper in all his undertakings, and accomplish thoroughly the salvation of all the faithful.

2. His humiliation and exaltation are described. [1.] *His humiliation.* As many were astonished at thee, to see him who was so high abased so low, to the form of a servant, to the death of a malefactor. *His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men; though fairer than the children of men, yet worn down with sorrows, like unto which were no sorrows;*

2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, *there is no beauty that we should desire him.*

3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

his temples pierced with thorns; his face buffeted and spit upon; the form of his countenance was changed, and he appeared a spectacle of woe. [2.] *His exaltation.* He shall be exalted, by his resurrection from the dead, ascension into heaven, and session on the throne of glory; and extolled; men and angels shall adore him: and be very high; all things in heaven and earth being made subject unto him. So shall he sprinkle many nations, by the word of his Gospel, see Deut. xxxii. 2. and the effusion of his Spirit which he sent down from on high, by the application of his Blood to men's consciences, and by the ordinance of baptism, which he instituted as the sign and seal of admission into his kingdom. *The kings shall shut their mouths at him, with reverence silent before him, and submissive to his will: for that which had not been told them, shall they see; and that which they had not heard, shall they consider; glorious truths hid from ages and generations, which the light of nature could not teach, nor any of their wise men and philosophers discover, concerning the Trinity in Unity, the incarnation of Jesus, the justification of the sinner through his atonement and infinite merit, the resurrection of the body, and the like; these, by the preaching of the Gospel, were brought to light; and they now became acquainted with the unknown God, and saw his glorious salvation in the Redeemer.*

## C H A P. LIII.

THE scene of this second section is to be placed at the beginning of the œconomy of grace, when, after the foundations of the kingdom of God, and of the word of faith, were laid, with all power and demonstration of the Spirit, an invincible incredulity discovered itself in the greater part of the Jewish nation; and it is so constructed, that three different speakers appear in it: the *first* is a company of the evangelists and apostles, complaining of the incredulity of the Jewish nation, and of the small fruit of their preaching, ver. 1. The *second* is a company of Jews, converted by the faith, after their preceding error; who first derive the principal cause of their incredulity from the perverse prejudice of their nation, concerning the humble state of the Messiah, and his sufferings, ver. 2, 3. *Secondly*, They set forth the true cause of those sufferings; the suretyship of the Messiah, and the expiation of sins to be made in consequence of that suretyship; at the same time describing very particularly the manner of those sufferings, namely, the shame of the cross, ver. 4—7. And *thirdly*, They set forth the justification of the Messiah, as well by his assumption into glory, as by the instances of the

4 ¶ Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and

the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

8 He was taken from prison and from judgment; and who shall declare his gene-

the divine care and providence towards him in the midst of his sufferings; whence it appeared manifestly, that he suffered not as a guilty person, and that he was most dear to God. The *third* speaker is God the Father, or a chorus of prophets speaking in his name, who confirm the mystery of faith set forth in the preceding part of this chapter, and declare the glorious fruits of the Messiah's passion, as well with respect to himself as to the church. There is no doubt of the immediate reference of this passage to Jesus Christ: the writers of the New Testament apply it to him; and we will add a few remarks at the end of the chapter from Bishop Chandler, demonstrative of it. Vitringa, with his usual pains, clearness, and learning, has not only in his notes, but in his introduction to this prophesy, shewn abundantly that it can belong to no other than the Messiah. I shall therefore refer to him such as desire farther satisfaction, and supply the remaining comment on this chapter, from the excellent paraphrase of Bishop Chandler.

Ver. 1. *Who hath believed our report?*] "Who, of the Jews, when the Messiah comes, will believe our report concerning him? Even they before whom the arm of the Lord, the virtue and power of God, is witnessed in his miracles." The Targum on ver. 8. has it, "Who can declare the miracles which shall be done in his days?" St. John (xii. 38.) understands *miracles* by the *arm of the Lord*.

Ver. 2, 3. *For he shall grow up, &c.] But he groweth up before him, as a tender shoot, and as a branch out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness, that we should gaze upon him, and no beauty, &c.* "Would you hear the cause of so great unbelief? It is this. Though he shall come before Israel, as the promised tender shoot, as the root and branch of Jesse's stock, (chap. xi. 1, 10. Jer. xxiii. 3.) yet, not appearing in the form of a tall, leafy, flourishing tree, but withered and shrivelled, as shrubs which grow up without water, disclaiming all pretensions to worldly greatness and riches and power, which is the *form and comeliness* that the Jews seek after, he shall not be received by his own. He, who was once the object of their desire, their hope, their delight, shall be no more desired by them, but rejected for want of that external beauty which they thought to find in him. This in plain words is the true reason of their dislike. He shall be despised and rejected of men, as he shall be a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; coming in a poor, suffering condition. Because he shall be a *hiding of faces from us*,"—(a phrase for one in grief, a mourner, or a leper, who was wont to cover the lip, or

all under the nose, Ezek. xxvi. 16—18. Lev. xiii. 45. where the Targum has it, *covering his beard, or face, as a mourner covers himself*, and Kimchi on 2 Sam. xv. 30. reads, "Such was the custom of mourners to cover themselves.") "He shall be despised, and we shall make no account of him."

Ver. 4. *Surely he hath borne our griefs]* "And yet his sorrows are none of them the punishment of his faults, but ours. They are truly *our griefs, and our sorrows*; they are our due, though he bears them like a sacrifice in our stead, and for this cause is thought by us to be as one stricken with a *leprosy*, or to be marked out for an example of God's displeasure." The Hebrew word נָגוּאִים *naguang*, or *stricken*, is rendered *quasi leprosus*, by the Vulgate, Aquila, Symmachus, and the later Jewish commentators. Instead of, *yet we did esteem, &c.* we may read, *when we did, &c.*

Ver. 5. *But he was wounded, &c.]* "But he shall be wounded to death for our transgressions, he shall be bruised to death (see ver. 10.) for our iniquities: the punishment which we deserve shall be laid on him, for our peace and benefit; and by his stripes we shall be healed." The word מְדוּכָה *meduka*, rendered *bruised*, signifies to *destroy*. See Job, v. 4. and so the noun in Psal. xc. 3. Thus Christ's body is said to be *broken*, 1 Cor. xi. 24. or to be *delivered to death*.

Ver. 6. *All we like sheep, &c.]* "In this sense he is the Saviour: for otherwise none of us, without him, could be saved. We are all sinners, and are gone out of the way of God's laws; and as such, are unable, by any deed or suffering of ours, to claim or deserve God's pardon. And therefore God lays upon him the punishment of the sins of the whole world, who, having never offended, is the fitter to propitiate his wrath." We may render the last clause, *And the Lord hath heaped together upon him the iniquities, &c.*

Ver. 7. *He was oppressed, &c.]* *It was exacted, and he engaged for, or, and he answered it, and opened not his mouth, &c.* Or, *The debt was demanded, &c.* Chandler: who remarks, that thus the learned L'Empereur renders the word נִגְגָס *niggas*, as we also do in ch. lviii. 3. "God insisted on an adequate punishment for maintaining the honour of his laws, which was impaired by so general a defection; and this person, of whom I have been speaking, is made the sacrifice. And in all his sufferings he was not more a lamb for sacrifice, than he was a lamb for innocence, patience, and resignation, while he was treated as a sacrifice."

Ver. 8. *He was taken from prison, &c.]* "And yet the indignities

ration? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither *was any* deceit in his mouth.

10 ¶ Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou

shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore will I divide him *a portion*

“indignities of his sufferings were enough to shock his patience, especially their taking away his life, under colour of law and justice, and a fair trial. Who that saw him in these sad circumstances, so evil treated by them, would have supposed him to be the promised Messiah, whom the Jews had so impatiently expected, of David’s line, when they saw him cut off out of the land of the living, by those whom he came to save? For I cannot too often repeat it, it was for the sins of my people, not his own, that he was stricken.” The former clause may be rendered, *He was taken up from distress, or taken off by cutherty and judgment; and who shall declare his duration?* &c. Instead of *duration*, Bishop Chandler reads *lineage*; and he observes, that *וְיָצַד* *otzer*, here translated *prison*, signifies any convention, or assembly of men, Jer. ix. 2. and thence is applied to any legal session of magistrates or single authority, as Judg. xviii. 7. 1 Sam. ix. 17.

*Ver. 9. And he made his grave, &c.] And he committed his burial to the wicked, and to the rich his death, &c. Or, And his burial was appointed with the wicked; but he was with the rich in his death, &c. Or, And he [the people] made his grave with the wicked, but it shall be with the rich after his death; because, &c. Chandler. “His sepulchre shall be a proof of his innocence, as well as of his death. “The people, to carry their contempt of him even to the grave, designed to bury him with the common malefactors, ver. 12.; but God disposed it otherwise: so that he who was too poor to provide a sepulchre for himself, was honourably interred at the expence of the rich; moved thereto from an opinion of the sufferer, and that he had done no wrong in deed or word.” Dr. Kennicot reads, *And he was taken up*, [that is, hanged on the cross] *with wicked men in his death, and with a rich man was his sepulchre*; observing, that since the preceding parts of the prophecy speak so indisputably of the sufferings and death of the Messiah, these words seem evidently to be meant as descriptive of the Messiah’s being put to death in company with wicked men, and making his grave or sepulchre not with rich men, but with one rich man. See his Dissert. vol. ii. p. 372, &c.*

*Ver. 10. Yet it pleased the Lord, &c.] “However, it pleased God that he should suffer, though God had another view in it than his murderers, even the salvation of mankind.” Bishop Chandler reads, *If he shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, which shall prolong their days, &c.* The Vulgate, says he, renders it, *videbit semen longævum*, in agreement with the LXX. and Chaldee. The Targum, supposing *seed* to be the nomi-*

native to the verb *see*, translates, *His seed shall see the kingdom of the Messiah: they shall multiply and prolong their days.* R. Alshet interprets *seed*, as above, by *disciples*; such as addit themselves to his religion who converted them; and thus it is used in the Jewish writings, for those who imitate the manners of their teacher. See Grotius and L’Empereur. The former clause may be read, *Yet, &c. he mortally afflicted him; or he pained him even to death.*

*Ver. 11. He shall see of the travail, &c.] “In consideration of what he suffered, he shall afterwards see all his enemies put under his feet; and by his law and his grace he shall reform the world, and prepare them who will believingly receive the benefits of his death for a total and eternal absolution and discharge from the punishment of their sins.” Instead of *by his knowledge*, we may read, *by the knowledge of him.* Knowledge may be taken here objectively, as the knowledge which he shall teach.*

*Ver. 12. Therefore will I divide, &c.] “Therefore, I say, he shall become victorious over his most potent adversaries; because by choice he shall offer up his life, and submit to be accounted and treated as a transgressor; whereas his death was intended as a sacrifice for the sins of others, in virtue whereof, like a priest, he shall intercede even for the sins of Israel who slew him.” Many things ought to be remarked in this prophecy; As, I. that one and the same person is spoken of from the beginning of it to the end; of whom a continued series of events is predicted, without passing to, or intermixing, the affairs of any other. II. This person is called the *servant of God, his righteous servant*; and is described as a most innocent, blameless, and holy person; of unparalleled patience, piety, charity, so as never to have gone astray like other men, and to have deserved no punishment on his own account, but ready to suffer any evil on ours. III. He is implied to have been once the *desire* of the Jews, and that his *generation*, or birth, was formerly declared to them, though at his coming they should not know nor desire him, because of the mean, abject, humble, afflicted condition in which he appeared. IV. Very opposite ideas are joined together in his character, which, not being consistent at the same time, must belong to him at different times, and in different views. Thus he is represented, as *a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief*; as *wounded and bruised to death*; as judicially condemned and cut off out of the land of the living; as *pouring out his soul to death*, and *put in his grave*. Again, he is said to *prosper, to be exalted, extolled, and to be very high*; to *see his disciples long flourish*, to *astonish**

with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was num-

bered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

and sprinkle Gentile nations, and, like a conqueror, to divide the portion of the great, and the spoil of the strong. V. Such is the merit of his voluntary oblation of himself, as to be expiatory of sin, of the sin of us all, and to be rewarded by God with the conversion of Gentile nations, and with an exalted, extolled, high dignity, far above that of any other person. From whence it must be inferred, that his suffering state is to precede his triumphant state. Lastly, it is suggested that he should be a prophet. By his knowledge, to justify many; a priest, bearing iniquities, making his life an offering for sin, and interceding for transgressors; and a king, as exalted, extolled, being very high, and dividing the spoil of the strong. All these marks are found to a tittle in the Christian's Messiah. It is impossible to set up any other king, or prophet, to whom but two or three of these characteristics may be applied, even in a tolerable figurative sense. It is admitted by the Jews, that Isaiah said not these things of himself, but of some other. Who then should this other be? Not the dispersed stricken nation of the Jews, (who are supposed by Celsus's Jew to suffer thus, that many Gentile proselytes may be made on occasion of their dispersion,) for their sufferings were the just punishment of their own sins. He, of whom Isaiah prophesied, is said voluntarily to offer up his life for the pardon of others, to have done no violence, to have spoken no deceit, not to open his mouth impatiently under his afflictions, but to make intercession for the transgressors, for whom he suffered. Very different in every respect is the behaviour of the Jews, in their present dispersion. Their violence and deceit towards their own brethren, their turbulent and rebellious carriage to their governors, particularly the Romans, whom they resisted to the last extremity; and their daily prayers for the subversion of the nations, in very opprobrious terms, from a persuasion that their redemption cannot commence but with the fall of the Christian powers, whose people they hope one day to rule as with a rod of iron; all these are irreconcilable with the expressions in the prophecy. As little pretence has Jeremiah, Josiah, or any other, to be the object of this prediction. Jeremiah died not for the transgressions or pardon of the Jews, who were gone into Babylon before he went to die in Egypt, and who returned not one day sooner for all the sufferings he underwent. He relates of himself, that he cursed the day of his birth; expostulated with God for giving way to their treachery; prayed that he might see the divine vengeance upon his enemies; and at last, very unwilling to die, capitulated for his life. (See Jer. xii. 1—4. xx. 12.) And is this a carriage which suits with the meekness of the lamb, and the silence of the sheep before her shearers? or which comes up to the character of one, who intercedes for the transgressors? Josiah lost his life to Pharaoh by his folly, contrary to the divine warning. How then did the Lord lay on these persons the iniquity of Israel? Or how were the people healed by their stripes, which really hastened on the general destruction? The sufferings of neither were meritorious. They did not pro-

cure them a seed, or long succession of disciples; nor were they the means of converting Gentile kingdoms; nor were they the sufferers, at any time after, exalted, extolled, and made very high, for what they endured. Of whom then does Isaiah write? "It is a hard lesson," saith Abenezra. But it would not be so hard would they but hearken to the ancient Jews, who were nearest the pure fountains of the traditionary sense of Scripture, and who all expound it of the Messiah. The Targum, as was before observed, expressly begins the prophecy, Behold my servant, the Messiah, and in ver. 10. it refers the seed to the kingdom of the Messiah; and not only the Targum, but the Jewish doctors with one mouth assert, as they received it from the mouth of their ancestors, that "the Messiah must be understood "by God's servant, that shall prosper and be exalted:" and those who allow that, do in effect grant that the Messiah must be the subject of all that follows; since there is no applying one part to one man, and another part to another, without mangling and confounding the order of the whole prophecy. See Dr. Sharpe's Second Argument, chap. 7.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, While Gentile nations and kings with wonder heard and believed the Gospel word, the Jews, obstinate in unbelief, rejected the counsel of God against their own souls.

1. The chapter opens with a complaint against them for rejecting the Gospel. *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?* Wondrous as the miracles were which Jesus wrought, and powerful as the doctrine was that he taught; yet very few embraced it, and, in general, they shut their eyes against all evidence, and would not hear nor understand. *Note;* (1.) Of multitudes that still hear the Gospel word, far the greatest part, it is to be feared, receive it not in the light and love of it. (2.) Till the Spirit of God give an inward revelation of Jesus to the soul, the most powerful preaching is ineffectual to conversion.

2. The reason of their disregard to Christ was the meanness of his appearance. *For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, or sucker, which every foot might crush; and as a root out of a dry ground, or a branch of a root, that for want of moisture is withered, and stunted in its growth, his family being reduced to the meanest circumstances, and nothing great was hoped for out of Nazareth. He hath no form nor comeliness; either respecting his person, which was not perhaps distinguished by beauty, as might be expected in the countenance of God incarnate; or rather his appearance was unpromising; brought up in a mean cottage; his dress agreeable to his station; his followers poor fishermen; and he, in every respect, unlike the personage whom the carnal Jews expected. And when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him; no pomp, no splendor attending him; but, poor and abject in their eyes, they could not desire him as the Messiah, who seemed so unable to rescue them from the Roman yoke.*

## C H A P. LIV.

*The prophet, for the comfort of the believing Gentiles, propheseth the amplitude of the church, their safety, their certain deliverance out of affliction, their fair edification, and their sure preservation.*

[Before Christ 719.]

**S**ING, O barren, thou *that* didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud,

thou *that* didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife; saith the LORD.

2 Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not; lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes;

yoke. *He is despised, as a person mean and contemptible; and rejected of men, his pretensions treated with disdain, and his company shunned as ignominious: or, destitute of men, no persons of distinction, no rulers or Pharisees, believing on him, or following him as his disciples: a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; his whole life, especially from the time when he entered on his ministry, being a scene of troubles, from the temptations of Satan, and the malice of his persecutors; while his own heart, affected with human miseries, groaned over the desolations of his enemies, which he foresaw, and caused the tears of tenderest compassion to flow; above all, the wrath of God, which our sins had deserved, was laid upon him, and filled his soul with bitterest anguish. And we bid as it were our faces from him, as a loathsome object: he was despised, and we esteemed him not; all consented to treat him with disregard, and to reject his claim as the Messiah. But let not the humiliations of Jesus make him appear little in our eyes; never were his grace and glory more manifested; never did he appear more lovely, than when for our sakes he stooped so low, to make satisfaction for the dishonour we had brought on God by our sins, and by humbling himself to obtain our exaltation.*

2dly, We have a farther account of the Redeemer's sufferings.

1. The cause of them, our sins and transgressions, by which God had been dishonoured, his wrath provoked, and our souls lost and undone; and this universally the case; for, *all we like sheep have gone astray; from the womb, foolish, disobedient, deceived, in nature corrupt, and in all our ways perverse before God. We have turned every one his own way, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and each, as inclination led, pursuing with wilful perseverance the iniquity which most easily beset him. Note: We can never know Christ aright, nor the wonders of his grace, till we become acquainted with our fallen state, and see the depths of sin in which we were by nature and practice sunk irrecoverably, but for his interposition.*

2. The nature of them. Grievings and sorrows, like unto which were no sorrows; reckoned by his enemies as the abhorred of God, all his sufferings reputed as just judgments for his crimes: *Wounded with the thorns, the nails, the spear; bruised with strokes and buffetings; his back ploughed up with stripes and scourgings; oppressed; though innocent, condemned as guilty; afflicted with every species of misery and woe, and ending his days on the cross; a death most painful, ignominious, and accursed.*

3. His behaviour under his sufferings, and his innocence. *He opened not his mouth, except in prayers for his*

murderers; no complaint was heard of their injustice or cruelty. *He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth: and of him we must learn the like patient silence before our bitterest persecutors. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death: it was intended that he should be buried, as well as die, with malefactors; but God ordered it otherwise; though his death was with the wicked, his grave was with the rich, Joseph of Arimathea laying his body in his own new tomb; and this honour was done him, because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth: though he was accused as an enemy to the state, a mover of sedition, and a deceiver of the people, the charge was infamous and false. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; and, from the cradle to the grave, in spotless innocence always did the things which pleased his Father, and was thereby qualified to bear the sins of others, having of his own none to answer for.*

4. The end or design of his sufferings was, to make atonement for the sins of men, and, by paying the penalty due to them, thereby to obtain their discharge. *He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: he not only healed the diseases of men's bodies, touched with tender sympathy for their sufferings, see Matt. viii. 17. but the griefs and sorrows due to our sins he took upon himself. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all; appointed him as the substitute for sinners, and consented to accept his sufferings in their stead; and having made him to be sin, or a sin-offering, for us, he was stricken and smitten of God, with the sword of divine justice; for the transgression of my people was he stricken; standing in their name and character, the wrath of God which they had provoked lighted upon his devoted head. Hence he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. Great, numberless, aggravated, were the sins of mankind; wide, and irreparable by any human means, the breach made between God and us. But lo! Jesus hath found a ransom: a blessed commutation is made of our guilt, misery, and sin to our Redeemer, and of his infinite merits to us, bringing pardon, peace, and healing to our perishing souls, in virtue of his sufferings and death on our behalf. This is a pleasing theme; upon it we can never sufficiently dwell; for on this all our everlasting hopes depend. We may observe here. [1.] The encouragement given to the chief of sinners, *that come to God by him*, Heb. vii. 25. If Jesus, as the scape-goat in the day of expiation, hath borne *all* our iniquities, then all true believers are assured of redemption through his blood,*

even



3 For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.

even the forgiveness of sins. [2.] This is God's own constitution, accepting the just for the unjust; and therefore we may with perfect satisfaction rest therein. [3.] This vicarious substitution of the Saviour's obedience unto death in the sinner's stead, is the grand peculiarity, and the distinguishing glory, of the Gospel dispensation.

5. God testified his approbation and satisfaction at the Redeemer's undertaking, by raising him from the dead. *He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who shall declare his generation?* which may be interpreted of the wrong done him in the unjust sentence passed upon him, when, as a malefactor, he was condemned at Pilate's tribunal, and crucified by the men of that generation, whose cruelty and inhumanity were past description. He is raised, therefore, for the justification of all the faithful; *and who can declare his generation?* since death hath now no more dominion over him, and he hath obtained for himself and his faithful disciples, whom no man can number, an eternity of glory.

3dly, The same subject is still farther prosecuted—the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow.

1. His sufferings. *It pleased the Lord to bruise him, exacting from him the punishment due to our iniquities. He hath put him to grief;* Jesus, in his human nature, enduring the severest anguish in his body, and agony in his soul, when he substituted himself in our stead, and made *his soul an offering for sin;* yielding up himself to suffer; not of constraint, but freely and willingly; and since such was the demand of justice, that nothing but the Saviour's life could satisfy for the sinner, *he poured out his soul unto death,* as a libation, shedding his blood for the remission of sin. *And he was numbered with the transgressors;* not only as he was reviled as such, and joined with them at his crucifixion; but, as *he bore the sin of many,* died under the imputation of their guilt, *and made intercession for the transgressors,* when on the cross he cried, "Father, forgive them;" and this in virtue of those very sufferings which he there endured, which were then, are now, and ever will be, the only effectual plea on which forgiveness of sin can be obtained.

2. His glory, in virtue of these sufferings, which was engaged for in the covenant of redemption, and for the sake of which he endured the cross, despising the shame. We have here several particulars of this glory:

[1.] *He shall see his seed;* he shall not die in vain; he will have a spiritual seed, a people who shall call him Father; and *he shall prolong his days;* himself shall live for evermore, and see the faithful children of his grace, who have yielded to be saved by him, sealed with the whole image of God here below, and gathered to him in eternity, to reign with him in glory everlasting.

[2.] *The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand;* the work of man's redemption, in which God delights, shall be effectually accomplished by him, to his Father's glory, his own everlasting praise, and the eternal comfort of the faithful.

[3.] *He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied;*

his pangs shall not prove abortive. *Note;* The ardent longing of the Redeemer after the salvation of men, and the travail he bore: well may we say, Behold, how he loved us.

[4.] *By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many: for he shall bear their iniquities:* he is righteous himself, and the author of everlasting righteousness to every faithful soul. They are *justified,* acquitted at God's bar from every accusation; and *many* declared perfectly righteous, and entitled to all the blessings which he has purchased. The way in which they become possessed of this blessing of justification to life, is, by the *knowledge of him,* becoming acquainted with his character and transactions, and receiving the record which God has given of his Son; no previous good dispositions in us being at all required; for we are to be saved by grace alone.

[5.] His kingdom shall be great, his subjects numerous; *therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong;* as some mighty conqueror, who by his arms subdues the nations under him, and takes their spoils. Or, *I will allot him a multitude of nations, and for a prey many shall fall to his share;* even very many of all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, brought by the preaching of the Gospel to the obedience of the faith. *Note;* (1.) Every faithful soul is Christ's spoil, rescued out of the hands of Satan, sin, and death. (2.) Though the unbelievers are, and have been in every age, so much more numerous than the saints of God; yet when the faithful shall be collected together at the last day, they will appear a host which no man can number.

CHAP. LIV.

THE great mystery of the obedience and passion of the Messiah having been set forth, the fruits, effects, and consequences of that obedience and passion, with respect to the church, are here related for the comfort of true believers; God himself, therefore, whom we left speaking at the end of the last section but one, chap. li. addresses the church of the true sons and daughters of Abraham and Sarah, whom he considers as *barren, afflicted, deprived of her husband, desolate,* and promises, under an elegant figure, a great increase and amplification of her state. The third section, contained in the present chapter, may be divided into two apostrophes; the *first* contains a promise of the church's remarkable fruitfulness and amplification; where we have *first* the promise itself, proposed under a two-fold figure, of a woman long barren becoming extremely fruitful, ver. 1. and of the enlargement of a tent, capable to hold this increased offspring, ver. 2, 3. *Secondly,* The foundation of the promise, the union of Jehovah as a husband with the church; ver. 4—6. The *first* apostrophe contains another promise of the constant love of God toward faithful believers; which is explained, ver. 7, 8. and is illustrated from the covenant with Noah, ver. 9, 10. The *second* apostrophe contains the promises of the Son of God to the same church; *first*, of beauty, splendor, and singular ornament, figuratively proposed, ver. 11, 12.

4 X 2

Secondly,

4 ¶ Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.

5 For thy Maker *is* thine husband; the LORD of Hosts *is* his name: and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.

6 For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God.

7 For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee.

8 In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee; saith the LORD thy Redeemer.

9 For this *is as* the waters of Noah unto me: for *as* I have sworn that the waters of

Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.

10 For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed; saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.

11 ¶ O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires.

12 And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.

13 And all thy children *shall be* taught of the LORD; and great *shall be* the peace of thy children.

14 In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee.

*Secondly*, of immediate dependence upon, and illumination by God, ver. 13. *Thirdly*, of true and internal peace;—middle of ver. 13. And *fourthly*, of defence against every hostile attempt, tending to its destruction: to which is added an elegant conclusion, the seal of these promises: ver. 14—17.

Ver. 1. Sing, O barren] We have often had occasion to observe, that the covenant between God and his people is represented in Scripture under that of marriage. See the notes on Solomon's Song, and chap. l. 1. of our prophet. If there were any doubt of the application of this chapter to the church of believers under the new economy, according to the analysis, St. Paul's application in Gal. iv. 27. would be wholly sufficient to determine it.

Ver. 2, 3. Enlarge the place of thy tent] The same figure and idea recur; chap. xxxiii. 20. which, together with the following references, will sufficiently explain the present passage: chap. xliii. 5, 7. xlv. 5. xlix. 12, 20.

Ver. 5. For thy Maker is thine husband] See Jer. iii. 20. In the original the verse may be divided into a stanza of four lines; for it is undoubtedly poetry, in which the first and third, and the second and fourth, are to be connected together. This will make the sense run thus: *For thy Maker is thine husband, and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel: the Lord of Hosts is his name; the God of the whole earth shall he be called.* See Bishop Lowth.

Ver. 6. For the Lord, &c.] *For as a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, the Lord calls thee again; as a wife of youth, after she had been despised, saith thy God.*

Ver. 7. For a small moment, &c.] The contrast, or antithesis, used in this and the following verse, illustrates in the most pathetic manner the mercy and affection of

God toward his servants in general. Vitringa is of opinion, that the little time of dereliction here spoken of, refers to the yoke of the law, and the legal principles with which the first believers were incumbered, before they were entirely emancipated into the liberty of the Gospel.

Ver. 9, 10. For this is as the waters of Noah] To confirm the promise above given, a beautiful emblem taken from the deluge is here set forth; for, as God then swore that the waters should no more cover the earth, to destroy the human race, in like manner he assures his church that no persecutions or afflictions should so come upon it in this world, as to overwhelm and utterly destroy it; which also he corroborates by a new emblem in the 10th verse, taken from the mountains and hills. The last clause of the 9th verse may be rendered, *So have I sworn that I will not foam out upon thee, or overflow thee in wrath, nor be harsh with thee.*

Ver. 11, 12. O, thou afflicted, &c.] O, thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, void of comfort; behold, I range thy stones in paint, and found thee upon sapphires: ver. 12. And I make thy turrets of rubies, and thy gates of carbuncles, and the whole circuit of thy walls of precious stones. The Almighty, preserver and protector of the church, here, in elegantly figurative terms, proceeds to assure her of his care towards her, as well in adorning and furnishing her with every spiritual gift, as in defending her against her enemies. The general meaning of the prophecy is, that God would render his church most beautiful, splendid, and pleasant to the spiritual eye, such as is a city to the natural eye, composed of precious, shining, red, and beautiful stones. The true ornaments of the church, and of its members, are those internal virtues and graces which render

15 ¶ Behold, they shall surely gather together, *but* not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake.

16 Behold, I have created the smith that

bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy.

17 No weapon that is formed against thee

der it so lovely in the sight of its great Redeemer. The reader will find this emblem of our prophet finely illustrated by St. John in his description of the new Jerusalem; where all will be pure, excellent, and holy, and whence every thing defiling and abominable will be for ever excluded. See Rev. xxi. If in this prophecy the gospel-church, in its first institution, be alluded to, we must understand that church as it exists in the sacred writings, while there can be no doubt that a future and more glorious state of the church is referred to in this remarkable prophecy. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 15—17. Behold, &c.]* The meaning of ver. 15. is this: "It shall come to pass, that enemies shall gather themselves together against, and oppose the church; but their endeavours shall become fruitless, and they shall fall." God, by his providence, would so order it, (as it follows in the next verse,) that whatever enemies should rise up against the church, should not be able to do it any hurt, as rising up without his appointment against a church protected; for, *behold*, says he, *I have created the smith, &c.* ver. 16, 17. which words contain the seal of the consolation. The state of the Christian church does not exclude enemies either within or without; nay, it is the lot of believers to *enter into the kingdom of heaven through much tribulation*: and it is a saying of our Lord, *In the world ye shall have tribulation;—but*, he subjoins, *be of good courage, I have overcome the world.* He therefore teaches here, that no power, no opposition, should prevail against this church; that no affliction should happen to it without his very peculiar providence; that all the enemies of it were subject to his providence; and that while, according to the order of his providence, he suffers these enemies of his people to *beat out* their sanguinary counsels for the destruction of the church, and to rage against it, he himself at the same time provides the *means* by which they shall perish. In fine, that no one shall, by words or deeds, maliciously oppose the church, but he shall be covered with shame, and in the end *condemned*. Compare chap. xlv. 7. It was a remarkable saying of Luther, founded upon these and the like promises, that, "though all the devils in hell should roar against him, yet should his doctrine, founded on the truth of the Gospel, continue for ever." See Vitringa. The meaning of the last clause, sealing up these splendid promises, is, "these good things above promised are the *lot* or *inheritance* promised to the church, which true believers possess rightly and by covenant, through the merit of their Surety and Redeemer."

REFLECTIONS.—Ist, Jerusalem, during her captivity, like a widow bereaved of her children, lamented her sad desolations; but when God restored her palaces, they were quickly re-peopled, and they soon, under the divine blessing, increased exceedingly. But this prophecy more particularly relates to the Gospel church, and the quota-

tion which the apostle makes, Gal. iv. is the sure key for the interpretation of it. We have here,

1. The low estate of the church, signified by a barren woman, or one desolate, bereft of husband and children; which may fitly represent her state when Christ came into the world, and till the day of Pentecost, when the Gentile nations were in great darkness; and among the Jews very few received the Gospel that he preached unto them: but this whole prophecy has particular reference to the reign of antichrist and to the glory of the latter days.

2. The joy arising from the glorious increase which should be made to the church, by the preaching of the apostles, and in future times. *More are the children of the desolate, the Gentiles, than the children of the married wife*, in which relation the Jewish church had stood, and few of them, comparatively, believed. *Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations*; the visible church of old being reduced within so small a compass, but now, by the accession of the Gentile converts, it spreads on every side; therefore, *spare not; lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes*; where the same image of a tent, to which the church is compared before, is continued, and the ministers are especially called upon to spare no labour or pains, but to spread abroad the Gospel, and confirm the disciples, that they may grow stronger in faith, as they grow more numerous; and God promises to bless their labours abundantly. *Note*; (1.) It is matter of great joy to every true member of Christ, to see his kingdom flourish, and his Gospel preached. (2.) They who enjoy fewer means and ordinances, are yet often seen to exceed others in their growth in grace who profess much greater privileges. (3.) It will be the labour of every faithful soul, to lengthen the cords, and strengthen the stakes, to spread the knowledge of Christ, and build up each other on their most holy faith.

3. The Lord encourages his church against all fear and shame. Unlikely as such a work appeared, she may trust God's promise, and wait confidently the accomplishment. *For thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, &c.* when her members were few, and none of the wise and noble embraced the Gospel; but quickly the scene was changed, when the Roman empire became Christian, and men of all ranks embraced the religion of Jesus.

4. The blessed author of this happy change is Christ, the Maker and husband of his church; for in these glorious and endeared relations he stands, able to the uttermost to protect and preserve her, as the Lord of Hosts; faithful to his promises, as the Holy One of Israel; and having universal dominion, as the God of the whole earth. *Note*; (1.) There is an union between Christ and believing souls nearer than that between husband and wife: they indeed are one body, but he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit with him. (2.) If our Maker be our husband, then we are deeply bound in love and duty to approve our fidelity to him. (3.) Our Redeemer is mighty,

shall prosper; and every tongue, *that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the*

**LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.**

mighty; and the more firmly we trust him, the more surely we shall stand.

2dly, We have comfort promised to the disconsolate church of God.

1. She is represented by a woman forsaken of her husband, either dead, or divorced by him and grieved at parting; and as a wife of youth refused, which made the separation more painful. And this may regard the state of the church, when, at the beginning, Christ was taken away by death, and the disciples were so disconsolate: or it describes the distress which ensued on the first publishing of the Gospel, when so many of the preachers and professors were cut off by the sword of persecution, which is signified by the little wrath, *boiling wrath*, as the word means, when God's face was hid, and for a *small moment* he seemed to *forsake* his people. *Note*; (1.) Whatever we feel of chastisement, we must own it little in comparison of what we have deserved. (2.) We must not be discouraged under present afflictions, however sharp; they are but for a moment; a little faith and patience will bring us through them.

2. God promises a gracious return of mercy. *With great mercies will I gather thee*, from the dispersion during the persecutions, as was fulfilled in the days of Constantine, when the profession of Christianity was established peaceably throughout the Roman empire; and will soon be abundantly more so, yea, *With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer*; all his dispensations, however dark for a season they may appear, are perfectly consistent with his love toward faithful souls. *Note*; (1.) It is purely of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, and not for any desert in us. (2.) Our present sufferings, however severe, are, comparatively with what we deserve, light and momentary; but they will be succeeded to every faithful soul by a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

3dly, Glorious things are spoken of thee, O thou city of God! We have,

1. The church in distress. *O thou afflicted*, with persecutions without, and heretical teachers within: or, *O thou indigent!* for of the poor the church ever chiefly consisted; and *tossed with tempest*, as a feeble bark, ready to be swallowed up in the stormy billows; and *not comforted*; no kind friend to support, no magistrate to protect her from oppression, as was the case under the pagan emperors, and is still under the papal tyranny; but God will be his faithful people's everlasting friend. Therefore,

2. He engages to raise up his church, a glorious church, and set it above the enmity of every foe.

[1.] He will raise it up a glorious church. The foundations, pavement, windows, gates, shall be of the most precious jewels, emblematical of Christ, and the gifts and graces of his Spirit, which should be abundantly dispensed; compared with which, all the splendour of this world's brightest gems vanishes, as the stars before the rising sun. Particularly, 1. Divine wisdom shall be plentifully dispensed: *All thy children shall be taught of the Lord*; not only

by the word and the ministry, but by the illumination of the Spirit of Truth, who shall lead them into all truth, opening their understandings, and giving them that experimental knowledge of Jesus and his salvation, which no other teacher can communicate to the soul. 2. Abundance of peace shall be diffused. *Great shall be the peace of thy children*; internal peace of conscience from a sense of God's love, external peace and harmony among believers, when, loving each other out of a pure heart fervently, all contentions and disputes shall be for ever banished. 3. *In righteousness shalt thou be established*; in the doctrine of justification through the infinite merit of Jesus; and in the practice of holiness, the blessed fruit and effect of it, which is the great ornament and support of the church, and without which it must quickly decay.

[2.] No foe shall be able to prevail against her; God will defend her, 1. From all *fear and terror*. *Thou shalt be far from oppression, for thou shalt not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near thee*. However great the fury and threatening of the oppressors, God will not only restrain their violence, but keep the minds of his people in perfect peace, while stayed upon him; and a great mercy it is to be delivered from the power of tormenting fear. 2. Every attempt made against them should end in the destruction of their enemies. *Behold, they shall surely gather together*: the enmity of Satan and the world is impiacable against the saints, and they will seek to trouble their repose: *but not by me*; as they have God against them, their designs must prove abortive. *Whoever shall gather together against thee, shall fall for thy sake*; be they never so mighty or numerous, they rush only on their own ruin; God in love to his people will cast them down.

3. As all the power which wicked men possess comes from God, he can, whenever he pleases, restrain the exercise of it. If the smith forges the military weapons, or the waster employs them to destroy, they are both the creatures of God, raised up by his providence, and subject to his over-ruling power; and therefore, whatever delations they are permitted to work in the earth, they shall be restrained from hurting God's people. *No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper*; all the secret contrivances, as well as the avowed opposition against God's church, shall be disappointed. 4. Every accusation shall be refuted, to the confusion of the accuser. *Every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment*, either seeking to calumniate and blacken their character, to misrepresent them to the civil magistrate, to claim authority over their consciences, or to lay to their charge their sins at God's bar, for which, according to the law, they must be cast and punished, *thou shalt condemn*, having a full answer to every accusation. Through the great Atonement God is satisfied; and by well-doing, the malicious insinuation of foolish men will be put to silence, and God, at least in the great day, will make our righteousness appear as the light, condemn the enemy and avenger, and give a verdict for his faithful people against every accuser.

Lastly, all these invaluable privileges are *the heritage of the*

CHAP. LV.

*The prophet, with the promise of Christ, calleth to repentance, and to faith. The happy state of them that believe.*

[Before Christ 719.]

**H**O, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price!

2 Wherefore do ye spend money for *that which is not bread?* and your labour for *that which satisfieth not?* Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye *that which is good*, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

3 Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, *even the sure mercies of David.*

4 Behold, I have given him *for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.*

5 Behold, thou shalt call a nation *that thou knowest not*, and nations *that knew not thee* shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.

6 ¶ Seek ye the LORD while he may be

*the servants of the Lord.* Not only here do they enjoy a part in present grace and protection, but look for an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away; and, cleaving perseveringly to Christ their living Head in the way of holiness, *their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord*; they will acknowledge the whole as the free gift of God; and God will vindicate their cause and character, and give them the reward of the purchased possession, which their divine and glorious Saviour hath obtained for them.

CHAP. LV.

THE fourth section in this chapter contains, *first*, a general invitation to all people, without distinction, desirous of embracing the true religion, freely to participate of the blessings of grace, procured by the sufferings of the Messiah, ver. 1, 2. *Secondly*, a particular application to the Jews, and to those among them who were slow of heart; whom the prophetic chorus, in the words of God, *first* exhorts to *faith* by a reason drawn from the excellence of the kingdom of God, and the privileges of it here promised to them; ver. 3. and from the example and emulation of the Gentiles, and their adherence to the church, for whom God had appointed the Messiah as their teacher, ver. 4. and who had gratefully and willingly received him, to the glory of God by the church, ver. 5. *Secondly*, he exhorts them to *repentance* from their vices and sins, the certain hope of pardon being given to all so disposed, ver. 6, 7. *Thirdly*, he obviates a doubt, which the prejudices of the Jewish nation encouraged, namely, that it could never be, that the Gentiles should obtain that place in the kingdom of God, which they thought due to themselves: wherefore he *first* extols and illustrates the depth of the divine counsel, which had provided that the Messiah should not want the fruit of his obedience and passion in respect to the Gospel-dispensation through the incredulity of the Jewish nation, as the Gospel, through divine grace, would make a remarkable, and at last, universal progress among the Gentiles, ver. 8—11. *Secondly*, he relates the execution of this design, the Gentiles applauding it; with the remarkable effects of the divine grace among them, ver. 12, 13.

*Ver. 1. Ho, every one that thirsteth*] It is universally agreed, that this prophecy concerns the beginning of the

Gospel, in describing the attributes of which period the prophet has hitherto been particularly employed; and that in this part of it, especially, both Jews and Gentiles are invited to the communion of gospel-blessings. The Jews themselves refer these words to the times of the Messiah. Divine grace is often represented under the similitude of *springs and streams* of water; and in the same manner divine knowledge, the food and support of the soul, is represented under the metaphors of meat and drink. See John, vi. 27. The prophet exhorts men, under this metaphor, to make use of the means of instruction offered by the Gospel; and thus the words are expounded by Christ himself, John, vii. 37. The word *buying* is often used to signify in general *gaining or procuring* any thing; and in this sense Solomon uses the words, when he bids us *buy the truth and sell it not*. The prophet here adds, *without money, and without price*, to shew that divine knowledge is of far greater value than to be purchased with money, being *the gift of God*. The freedom of divine grace, and of all the blessings of the Gospel, is also strongly denoted by these words. See Rom. iii. 24. Rev. xxii. 17. and Vitringa.

*Ver. 3. Incline your ear, &c.*] Vitringa is of opinion, that these words are immediately addressed to the Jews, and he paraphrases them thus: "O ye Jews, who ought to be ashamed of refusing that grace, and the blessings accompanying it, which, offered equally to the Gentiles and to you, will be received by them with avidity; apply yourselves diligently, laying aside the prejudices that you are under, to know the doctrine of the kingdom of heaven, and to consider prudently the wonderful appearances, which will render the beginning of the kingdom of God remarkable among you." *The sure mercies of David*, mean those promises and blessings of the new covenant, which were to be fulfilled by the Messiah, who sprung from David. There are some who by *David* here understand the Messiah: an opinion which they ground particularly upon the next verse. See Psalm lxxxix. 2.

*Ver. 4. Behold, I have given him, &c.*] The *witness and leader* here spoken of, unquestionably, is the Messiah, whom God declares that he had given, not to instruct the Jews only, but also the people of the Gentiles. Instead of *commander*, Vitringa reads *instructor*. *Christ is the faithful and true witness*. See Rev. iii. 14.

*Ver.*

found, call ye upon him while he is near :

7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts : and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

8 ¶ For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

9 For, *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

10 For, as the rain cometh down, and the

snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater :

11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth : it shall not return unto me void ; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it.

12 For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace : the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap *their* hands.

*Ver. 8—11. For my thoughts are not your thoughts*] This whole period consists of two comparative sentences; the one of which sets forth the height and sublimity of the thoughts and ways of God, above the thoughts and ways of men; the other, the undoubted power of the word of God, sent forth by him to effect the salvation of mankind. The former is grounded upon the perfect knowledge of God; the other, upon his infinite power. This passage is well connected with the whole argument of this and the former section, as well as with what immediately precedes, respecting the calling of the Gentiles. Concerning the metaphor in the 10th verse, it should be observed, that the word of God, especially his prophetic word, is usually compared in Scripture to *rain*. See Deut. xxxii. 2. Job, xxix. 22, 23. When the inspired writers, therefore, intend to describe the certain completion of any prophecies, they represent it frequently under the image of rain, which impregnates and fertilizes the earth. Isaiah, having in the long prophecy from chap. xl. and especially in ver. 3, 4, 5, of this chapter, displayed the covenant of God with the Israelites, and the due performances of his mercy towards David, established by an oath, wherein he promised that there should never be wanting a king to sit on his throne, and that the person peculiarly designed for this high office, should be teacher and king of the Gentiles; in order to convince any one who should think this incredible, he bids them consider, that the ways of God are immensely higher than those of men; and that those things are easy to him, which are difficult to us. He adds, that the completion of the prophecies, however wonderful, would be inevitably certain; that the prophetic word of God was like unto snow or rain, which, as they do not return to heaven till they have answered the end in watering, impregnating, and fertilizing; in *giving bread to the hungry, and seed to the sower*; so likewise the prophetic word would accomplish its end, that is to say, its predictions. See Michaelis and Vitringa.

*Ver. 12. For ye shall go out with joy*] The prophet, in words and ideas which seem borrowed from the departure of the Jews from Babylon, here represents the first preachers of the Gospel going forth to preach the glad tidings of salvation to the Gentiles, together with the good success of their expedition, in the 13th verse. See ch. xli. 19. The

meaning of the last clause, *and it shall be to the Lord for a name*, is, "it shall be a striking argument of the divine favour, most honourable to God, and to continue for all ages; so that whoever shall compare the state of the renewed world, under the influence of divine grace, with its former state, shall acknowledge and celebrate the everlasting power and goodness of God." The memory of excellent men and teachers in the church, says Vitringa, as proofs and monuments of the divine grace, is never abolished: they are *palms, cedars, and myrtles*, flourishing in perpetual verdure.

REFLECTIONS.—We have here,

1. A gracious invitation to sinners in general, to come and partake of the benefits and ordinances of the Gospel. *Ho, every one that thirsteth*; no exception is made; the invitation is general and universal to sinners of all ranks and degrees; if they thirst for pardon, righteousness, and salvation, as those who see themselves perishing without it, then they may come to Jesus Christ, and find welcome: *come ye to the waters*, Christ is the fountain of living waters, his spirit is usually represented by this emblem, and his ordinances are the pools; in these the soul maintains communion with the Saviour, and he dispenses out of his fulness to the thirsty: *and he that hath no money*; free and gracious is the salvation of the Gospel, requiring no meritorious qualifications, nothing of our own to recommend us to the divine favour, for indeed we have nothing worth his acceptance; we are by nature utterly corrupt and sinful, and our spiritual poverty most abject and miserable; yet that is no discouragement: no, it is such, and such alone, whom Christ invites, and who will be persuaded to come to him to *buy and eat*. As food eaten and digested nourishes the body, so do the promises of the Gospel, when mixed with faith, profit our souls. Christ in his ordinances is to be fed upon, his word is the bread of life; and in his sacraments we eat his flesh and drink his blood, the sweetest and most nourishing food for our souls, called therefore wine and milk: *come, buy wine and milk*; the invitation is repeated, because of our stupid backwardness; and Christ urges our acceptance of his mercy, as if it were a favour done to him, instead of an unutterable obligation conferred on us. And lest we should hesitate, because mention is

made

13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree : and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign *that* shall not be cut off.

made of a purchase, and we have nothing to pay, the whole is offered *without money, and without price* ; Christ, indeed, hath paid to the full for all the blessings that he bestows ; but to us they come free as the light which shines on us, or the air we breathe.

2. Christ expostulates with those who seek righteousness and comfort out of him. *Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not ?* all the toil and pains of the worldly-minded can never procure them solid satisfaction ; corroding cares leaven their gains and corrupt their enjoyments ; the pleasures that they seek in present vanities, are found husks instead of bread, and disappointments perpetual bid them seek a better and more enduring portion. And they who, by their doings and duties, would fain establish a righteousness for acceptance before God, labour but in the fires ; their bread is poison, their toil their ruin ; the more they seek thus to enter into life, the farther they advance in the path of death ; for out of Christ there is no justifying righteousness ; and all worldly enjoyments, without his love and favour, are but flattering dreams ; and death, too late, will awaken the soul to perceive the fatal delusion. Happy they who are led to seek their happiness from Christ alone, and from him to expect righteousness and salvation.

3. He exhorts them to hearken to his word, and embrace the true good, which he offers to bestow upon them. *Hearken diligently unto me,* with such serious attention as the importance of the salvation of an immortal soul demands, *and eat ye that which is good ;* the good things, which the word of truth in the Gospel proclaims, such good things as pass man's understanding ; *and let your soul delight itself in fatness,* in the pardon and peace, righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost, which are provided as the richest feast for the believing soul. *Incline your ear, and come unto me,* Jesus would kindly, would earnestly court the sinner to taste the riches of his grace : Strange ! that we should need intreaty to come to him and be happy ! *hear, and your soul shall live, or that your soul may live ;* life spiritual and eternal being derived from the word of Jesus, and they who hear and perseveringly believe in him in the way of holiness can never die : *and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David ;* to strengthen our faith, God condescends to bind himself under a covenant with the faithful. The blessings of the covenant are called mercies, because man's desert is utterly excluded ; and mercies of every kind, whether respecting grace or glory ; *the mercies of David,* that is, of Christ his Son, by whom they were obtained, through whom they are dispensed, and in whom all the promises of God are *yea and amen.* Blessed, for ever blessed be God, for Jesus Christ !

4. Christ is promised for a witness to his people ; him hath God the Father sent, to bear witness to the truth, and he is faithful and true. He came in the flesh, to publish to all nations the great salvation of God, and by his works and miracles sufficiently proved his divine mission : him we are commanded to hear and obey, for he is a leader and commander to the people ; a leader, as he instructs and guides his

people to walk in the ways of truth and righteousness : a commander, the captain of our salvation, who will subdue all our enemies before us, and make his faithful people more than conquerors ; who bids us follow him, and leads the way to victory and everlasting triumphs. *Note ;* They, who perseveringly with the heart receive Christ's word as true, will follow his example as their pattern, and manfully fight under his banners, win through his grace, and wear, the crown of righteousness.

5. Vast and numerous shall be the converts who at the invitation of Jesus shall come to him. *Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not,* the nations of the Gentile world, that before were not acknowledged as God's people ; *and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee,* denoting the eagerness with which the Gentiles would receive and embrace the Gospel ; *because of the Lord thy God ;* because of the demonstration of the Spirit and power accompanying the word, and the grace and love of God in the Gospel, which are mightily constraining ; and because they now perceive that there is no approaching a holy God but through a Saviour ; *and for the Holy One of Israel,* trusting on his faithfulness ; or *to the Holy One of Israel,* to Christ the holy Saviour ; on whose atonement, merit, and grace, they alone depend ; *for he hath glorified thee ;* God the Father hath exalted his Son Jesus, given him to be head over all, committed all power into his hands ; and he is glorified when sinners come to him, out of his fulness to receive an abundant supply of all their wants ; and this is an encouragement to draw near to him, since our salvation is his glory.

2dly, We have the same subject, of the return of sinners to God, farther prosecuted.

1. They are urged to seek God, from the consideration of his rich grace and readiness to receive the miserable that fly to him for mercy. [1.] The persons addressed are *the wicked and righteous,* for such we all are by nature, and such Christ Jesus came to seek and save ; they who know not this to be their natural character, have no part nor lot in his salvation. [2.] The way in which they are directed to proceed. In penitence, prayer, and faith. *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near ;* God will be found of them that seek him ; this is his promise : therefore on our knees we must cry for the pardon and mercy which we need and he offers to bestow, and this without delay, before his abused patience cast us off, and say, my Spirit shall no longer strive ; or death carry us to the tomb, when it will be too late to knock, because the door is shut. Oh, how should this awful consideration awaken our importunity, while the day of life and mercy lasts ! *Let the wicked forsake his way,* let him turn from the paths of sin with loathing and abhorrence, nor spare one darling lust ; *and the unrighteous man his thoughts ;* let not one allowed desire of evil remain ; the views of promised grace must constrain the sinner to part with all readily, cheerfully, unreservedly, and to cleanse the temper as well as reform the practice ; *and let him return unto the Lord,* from whom he had so greatly departed ; to stand before him as a criminal seeking pardon, as a helpless worm to find grace, and as a redeemed

## CHAP. LVI.

*The prophet exhorteth to sanctification: he promiseth that it shall be accepted without respect of persons: he inveigheth against blind watchmen.*

[Before Christ 719.]

**T**HUS saith the LORD, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.

redeemed soul now engaged in his service, and desiring to follow him in all his holy ways; whoever thus seeks, will find. For, [3.] God promises that *he will have mercy upon him; yea, will abundantly pardon*; no guilt so great, no iniquity so aggravated, but that there is with him grace abounding to the chief of sinners. And this is mentioned, not as the condition and reward of our repentance and prayers, but as the argument to engage us thereto; seeing we can neither repent nor pray, till in some sense we see this mercy and grace extended towards us. [4.] He answers an objection which their fears might raise, guilt being ever ready to drive us to despair. They, indeed, who have never known the burden of sin, think it easy to believe in God's mercy; while they who have once felt it, are soon convinced of the unbelief of their hearts. *My thoughts*, says God, *are not your thoughts*, in general with regard to sin, Christ, happiness, &c. and particularly which seems here intended respecting the manner of the sinner's acceptance: for when we scarcely dare believe he can receive such vile wretches as we are, he knows how to glorify himself in being the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus; *neither are your ways my ways*; ours are perverse, his pure; ours lead to death and hell, his to life and glory: we never could forgive one who had offended us as we have God, yet he can and doth freely and fully both forgive and forget it. Thus, *as the heavens are higher than the earth*, so incomparably transcendent are his thoughts and ways of mercy and grace beyond all that we can alk or think.

2. The Lord engages to make his own word effectual to all that believe. For as, in the kingdom of nature, the rain and snow, directed by Divine Providence, water the earth, and cause its fertility, accomplishing God's purposes of mercy in providing food for men's bodies; So, says he, *shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth*, the word of the Gospel, of which Christ is the sum and substance; *it shall not return unto me void, but*, accompanied with divine energy, *it shall accomplish that which I please*, be effectual to the conversion of numbers that yield to be saved by grace: *and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it*, producing a plenteous harvest of converted souls, and leaving those inexcusable who reject it. *Note*; It is a great encouragement to all the faithful ministers of Christ, to be assured that they shall not labour in vain in the Lord: to some they will be a favour of life unto life; to others a favour of death unto death: and in both God will be glorified.

3. The word, being made effectual to the conversion of men's souls, will produce great joy in the hearts of the faithful; as was the case with the Jews when released from Babylon, to whom this may primarily be applied, and who

2 Blessed is the man *that* doeth this, and the son of man *that* layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.

3 ¶ Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree.

herein represented the people of God going forth from the slavery of sin, their bands loosed, and they rejoicing in the glorious liberty of the sons of God, while the mountains and hills break forth into singing, as if congratulating their deliverance, and all the trees of the fields clap their hands for joy; which may express the delight of the apostles and ministers of the word, when they saw their labours so abundantly blessed, and so many converted by their preaching, who rejoiced with them at so blessed an event; but more especially and particularly refers to the glory of the latter days. And in consequence of this a wondrous change will take place in men's tempers and dispositions. *Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree; and*, being thus renewed in the spirit of their minds, *it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off*. Such is the infinite mercy and love of God towards all his faithful people!

## CHAP. LVI.

THIS fifth section is doctrinal and prophetic; the doctrinal part is three-fold: The first member contains an exhortation, or divine command, to *keep judgment, and to do righteousness*, recommended to the people of God. The second describes the fruit to be reaped from the diligent observance of piety and love; namely, blessedness; ver. 2. The third contains the extension of this promise, with respect to the subjects of every kind and order; first, general, ver. 3. secondly, special, which asserts the rights and privileges of eunuchs who obey the laws of the new covenant, ver. 4, 5. and of strangers, ver. 6, 7. The prophetic part contains three predictions; the first, of the remarkable amplification of the church, ver. 8. the second, of the irruption of barbarous people, who should lay waste the church, ver. 9. the third, of a remarkable corruption in the rulers of the church, as the cause of that judgment; ver. 10, 11. For my salvation, &c. seems to allude particularly to that manifestation of the kingdom of God, which was made by his signal judgments in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.

Ver. 2. *That keepeth the sabbath*] By *keeping the sabbath*, which was particularly ordained for the worship of God, is meant all that which pertains to the divine worship under the Gospel; and by *keeping the hand from doing evil*, is meant, the abstinence from all evil and immoral works. It cannot possibly be supposed that the prophet here speaks merely of the external or legal sabbath.

Ver. 3—7. *Neither let the son of the stranger, &c.*] The strangers and eunuchs were excluded from the privileges of



4 For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose *the things* that please me, and take hold of my covenant ;

5 Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters : I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.

6 Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant ;

7 Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of

prayer : their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar ; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.

8 The LORD God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather *others* to him, besides those that are gathered unto him.

9 ¶ All ye beasts of the field, come to devour, yea, all ye beasts in the forest.

10 His watchmen *are* blind : they are all ignorant, they *are* all dumb dogs, they cannot bark ; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.

11 Yea, *they are* greedy dogs *which* can never have enough, and they *are* shepherds that cannot understand : they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter.

of native Jews. In this period they are informed that the time is coming when those distinctions and restraints shall have no force, when the inward endowments of the soul should be sufficient to give pious persons a title to the communion of saints ; and their name should be written in the book of life : A more lasting remembrance than that of the most numerous posterity. The temple was originally designed for strangers, as well as Jews, as a place to offer up their prayers to the divine Majesty, which is sufficiently plain from the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of it, though the number of profelytes was but small till the time of the second temple : But there can be no doubt that the 7th verse alludes particularly to the conversion of the Gentiles. This truth could not be told to the Jewish people otherwise than by using terms taken from rites familiar to them, unless the nature of the Christian dispensation had been previously explained ; a matter evidently unfit for their information, when they were yet to live so long under the Jewish law : For though the prophets speak of the little value of their regard due to the ceremonial law, they easily make themselves understood that they mean, when it is observed without the moral law ; which they describe in the purity and perfection of the Gospel : So admirable was this conduct, that while it hid the future dispensation, it prepared men for it. See Bishop Warburton's Div. Leg. Upon the whole, we may observe, that the principal scope and design of this period is, to teach that all the privileges of the Gospel should be common to all, without distinction of nation, state, or condition ; that God would distribute to all believers, according to the measure of grace imparted to them, equal gifts, as our Lord has taught in the parable of the vineyard, Matth. xx.

Ver. 8. *The Lord God which gathereth the out-casts, &c.]* In this verse a three-fold act of God is mentioned ; *first*, his gathering together the out-casts of Israel ; and then two gatherings of profelytes or strangers to be made to Israel ; wherein the prophet alludes to the grand collec-

tion of the Gentiles to Jesus Christ, the great shepherd of his flock.

Ver. 9. *All ye beasts of the field]* Interpreters are generally of opinion, that the *beasts of the field and forest* are here called upon to devour the nominal people of God, corrupted in their religion and manners ; that is to say, to execute the judgments of God upon them : by which, Vitringa thinks, are pointed out the enemies of the Christian church ; the Goths, Vandals, Turks, and others, who committed great devastations upon it, after it deviated from its first faith, and became extremely corrupt ; as is particularly specified in the next verses.

Ver. 10—12. *His watchmen]* The prophet in these words paints in a lively manner the very corrupt government of the church. The consequence of which, is that deplorable state of the church described in the next section. Nothing can be more strong and expressive than the words of the prophet ; he turns the subject before him into every form ; and, as the greatest part of his discourse is metaphorical, he makes use of figures and emblems, as usual, most admirably adapted to express his meaning. The vices which he particularly objects to these ecclesiastical governors, are, *first*, ignorance and unskilfulness in the things pertaining to their office ; *secondly*, idleness and negligence to reprove the vices of the people committed to their charge, or to awaken them to repentance, whereby they might escape the judgments of God : *thirdly*, slothfulness and a love of ease : *fourthly*, an insatiable avidity for profit and pleasure : *fifthly*, stupidity, arising from that source ; and *lastly*, extreme luxury : vices which too much infected the church from the sixth and following centuries, when darkness, corruption, and superstition, almost universally prevailed. See Vitringa. Instead of *sleeping*, ver. 10. Bishop Lowth reads *dreamers*. Ver. 11th may be rendered, *Yea, these dogs have a greedy or a strong appetite : They know not when they have enough ; and, though they are shepherds, they know no discretion : They all look to their own ends ; every one for his gain, one and all.*

12 Come ye, *say they*, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as this day, *and* much more abundant.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, From the privileges of the Gospel, the Lord enforces obedience to the precepts of it.

1. The privileges are inestimable. *My salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.* He calls it *my salvation*, because the contrivance and execution of it were wholly his own; and *my righteousness*, because in this salvation the most eminent display was to be made of the divine justice in the sufferings and obedience of Jesus unto the death of the cross, and in the acceptance of sinners through him, in a way wherein God might at the same time glorify his righteousness, and yet be the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. And the time was now near when the Saviour should be revealed, comparatively speaking in the view of the time elapsed since the first promise was made, Gen. iii. 15.

2. The duty of those who partook in this salvation is enforced. For they who truly understand the doctrine of God's free grace in the salvation of sinners, will ever feel the obligation it lays upon them to walk in all holy conversation and godliness. [1.] *Keep ye judgment, and do justice*; let God's word be the rule of your conduct, and in all your ways approve yourselves to him in uprightness, fidelity, simplicity, and godly sincerity. [2.] *Keep the sabbath from polluting it*; that, being God's day, should be wholly devoted to his service, and employed in his worship; not only must we rest from servile employments, but seek to improve the sacred hours in every exercise of piety and devotion, which may contribute to raise up our affections to heavenly things, and promote in others the same gracious dispositions. [3.] *Keep thy hands from doing any evil*, preserve a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man; abstain from every known sin; and let it be your labour, study, and prayer, through grace, to cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

3. God pronounces his blessing on all such. *Blessed is the man that doeth this*, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; who embraces this great salvation, and adorns the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

2dly, We have the encouragement given to those who, though willing to join themselves to the Lord, were disheartened.

1. The eunuch might lament his unhappy case, saying, *I am a dry tree*, under the reproach of being written childless, and expressly excluded from the congregation of the Lord, Deut. xxiii. 1. yet God speaks comfort unto such. *Thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs which keep my sabbaths*, religiously observant of God's worship on that holy day, and all the instituted ordinances of religion; and *choose the things that please me*, attentive to God's revealed will in his word, and delighting in that which he commands, serving not of constraint but willingly; and *take hold of my covenant*, embrace it as their only hope, trust on it with unshaken confidence, and walk under the influence of the blessed promises contained therein; *even unto them will I give, in mine house, and within my walls, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters*: children are a precious gift,

they are like arrows in the hand of the giant, and father is an honourable title; but every honour, every possession, every enjoyment here is trivial, compared with an interest in God's regard, and a name in his book of life; this relates to eternity, *I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.* Note; (1.) When we set temporal blessings against spiritual, time against eternity, the infinite disproportion between them should constantly determine our choice to the better part. (2.) All real good that we ever can enjoy here or hereafter comes from God's free gift, and must be acknowledged to his glory.

2. The Gentile alien might fear that God had utterly separated him from his people, see Deut. xxiii.; but his fears are groundless, the wall of separation between Jew and Gentile being cast down; and therefore, if he *joined himself to the Lord*, renouncing all other gods, and cleaving to him alone, *to serve him with fidelity and constancy*; *to love the name of the Lord*, deeply sensible of his amazing grace, and powerfully constrained by the views of it; *to be his servant*, in all willing and cheerful obedience, counting his service perfect freedom; *every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it*, diligent and conscientious in the observance of this sacred day of rest, and *taketh hold of my covenant*, the covenant of love and peace in a Redeemer, as the foundation of all his hopes; such need apprehend no exclusion from the divine favour, or the assembly of the faithful: *Even them will I bring to my holy mountain*, the church of the faithful redeemed, and give them a right to partake of all the blessings and privileges bestowed upon it, and *make them joyful in my house of prayer, or the house of my prayer*, where prayer and supplications are offered to God, and he meets his people with joy and gladness, giving an answer to the prayer of the afflicted, and comforting his mourners. *Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar*; their prayers, praises, works of faith, and labours of love, shall through Christ, the altar which sanctifieth the gift, become a sacrifice of a sweet smell, well-pleasing to God: *for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people*, no distinction any longer subsisting between Jew and Gentile, but all incorporated in one holy church, of which Christ is the living head.

3. God, having provided a house of prayer for all people, will furnish it with worshippers. *The Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel*, the spiritual Israel, who accept of the offers of the Gospel, *saith, Yet will I gather others to him, besides those that are gathered unto him*, to Christ, or his church, to which, in every age and generation, multitudes will be gathered. And it may particularly be applied to those, who, being persecuted by the Pagan emperors, were, under Constantine, peaceably settled in their assemblies, and to the conversion in a general sense of numerous nations which followed, till then strangers to the Christian faith; and this may look for its final accomplishment in the last day, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be come in, and all Israel, till then dispersed, shall be converted and saved.

3dly, After all the comforts and promises going before, a scene

CHAP. LVII.

*The blessed death of the righteous. God reproveth the Jews for their whorish idolatry: he giveth evangelical promises to the penitent.*

[Before Christ 699.]

**T**HE righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the right-

a scene of desolation begins, which is continued in the following chapters. This may be referred to the sins and punishments of the Jewish people by the Babylonians and Romans; or, as some learned interpreters suggest, and as observed above, foretels the ravages of the Goths and Vandals, and other barbarous people, who were sent to punish the great corruptions which had crept into the Christian Roman empire.

1. The beasts of prey are summoned to execute God's judgments; men, fierce and savage in their tempers, who would not keep back the sword from blood. *Note*; God has instruments ever at his beck, to execute his wrath. Woe to the sinner, to the nation, that by their iniquities and impenitence provoke the divine justice!

2. The principal cause of these judgments is, a lazy, ignorant, worldly-minded, covetous, drunken, careless ministry. Such was probably the case in Isaiah's day: happy were it, if after-times had afforded no parallel! A dreadful character is here drawn: *His watchmen are blind*; they who are appointed to descry the approaching enemy, and give warning, are themselves blind and insensible: unawakened in their own souls, they never saw the guilt and danger of sin; therefore cannot blow the alarm, and persuade others by the terrors of the Lord. *They are all ignorant* of the scriptures, and that knowledge which maketh wise unto salvation, and cannot preach a Gospel which they have not themselves understood. *They are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark*; never reprove men's sins, and hate the work of the ministry in which they are engaged: ordained to lift up their voice like a trumpet, but *sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber*; slothful, indolent, glad to devolve on others the irksome task of preaching and prayer, and seeking ease, instead of enduring hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. *Yea, they are greedy dogs, which can never have enough*; of the duty of the ministry, the least part is sufficient; of the gain of it, nothing can satisfy them; infinitely more solicitous in prosecuting preferment, than seeking lost souls; and never inquiring the weight of the charge, but the value of the benefice. The words **לֹא יָדְעוּ שְׂבַעַה** *lo iadu sabah* may be rendered, *of insatiable appetite, that never can be filled*, whose belly is their god, and eating and drinking their supreme happiness. *And they are shepherds, or though they are shepherds, pretend to be so, they cannot understand*; not acquainted with divine things themselves, and therefore utterly incapable of teaching others. *They all look to their own way, follow their own pleasures and worldly advantage, careless of the cause of God and truth; every one for his gain from his quarter; this is their grand object, and on this their chief pains are be-*

teous is taken away from the evil to come.

2 He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.

3 ¶ But draw near hither, ye sons of the fornicers, the seed of the adulterer and the whore.

4 Against whom do ye sport yourselves? against whom make ye a wide mouth, and

stowed. *Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink*; their bottle is more beloved than their books: pleased to see the wine sparkle in the glass, they put it round, sit long at the cups, till bloated, inflamed, or drunken, their time and their faculties are destroyed; and, far from being ashamed of such scandalous immoralities, their great concern is, to renew the entertainment, and make a fresh appointment for the next day: *for to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant*. Supine and secure, they forget eternity, promise themselves days and years to come, consider neither the guilt of their course, nor the uncertainty of their enjoyments, but encourage each other to mutual neglect of God and their souls; till he, in an unexpected hour, with terrible surprise calls them to give account of their ministry, and arraigns them at his tremendous bar!

CHAP. LVII.

THE sixth section, contained in this chapter, may be divided into three parts: The *first part* contains an exclamation of a prophet, or a prophetic company, deploring the carnal security and uncommon stupidity of the men of that time, wherein the corrupt church was to be judged by God; giving *first*, as a proof of this security, that they saw good men taken away from them without any regard, ver. 1. *Secondly*, a mitigation hereof with respect to the just themselves, ver. 2. The *second part* contains a conviction of the adulterous church, for the grievous crimes committed by her, and her shameful revolt from God; wherein *first* is the conviction itself, with an enumeration of her faults, as contempt, derision, and persecution of good men: ver. 3, 4. A most shameful kind of idolatry and superstition, joined with the murder of the innocent, and that both private and public, ver. 5—8. A veneration of a certain king, substituted as it were in the place of God, as if the salvation and defence of the people depended upon his favour; ver. 9. and an obstinate perseverance in this proceeding, ver. 10, 11. *Secondly*, a denunciation of the divine judgment, ver. 12, 13. The *third part* is consolatory, with respect to the remains of the faithful, and of such as shall truly repent: wherein we have, *first*, the prophetic company, in the name of God, foretelling the reformation of the church, and arousing the teachers appointed by God for this work, ver. 14. *Secondly*, the consolation of the penitent and contrite, who should turn from their vices to God, and intreat his grace, ver. 15—18. *Thirdly*, a declaration of the manner and means whereby God would effect this great work, together with the success

draw out the tongue? *are ye not children of transgression, a seed of falsehood;*

5 Inflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree, slaying the children in the valleys under the cliffs of the rocks?

6 Among the smooth *stones* of the stream *is* thy portion; they, they *are* thy lot: even to them hast thou poured a drink-offering, thou hast offered a meat-offering. Should I receive comfort in these?

7 Upon a lofty and high mountain hast thou set thy bed: even thither wentest thou up to offer sacrifice.

8 Behind the doors also and the posts hast thou set up thy remembrance: for thou hast discovered *thyself to another* than me, and art gone up; thou hast enlarged thy bed, and made thee a *covenant* with them; thou lovedst their

bed where thou sawest *it*.

9 And thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debase *thyself even* unto hell.

10 Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope: thou hast found the life of thine hand; therefore thou wast not grieved.

11 And of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me, nor laid *it* to thy heart? have not I held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not?

12 I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works; for they shall not profit thee.

13 ¶ When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee; but the wind shall carry them

of it, ver. 19. *Fourthly*, a limitation of the grace with respect to the wicked, who should obstinately persevere in their evil purposes, ver. 20, 21.

*Ver. 1, 2. The righteous perished, &c.]* These words contain a kind of prelude to the distressful scene which is opened immediately after; for the prophet designing to describe the melancholy state of the *adulterous church*, to be chastised by the severe judgments of God, he beholds the few pious and good men yet remaining in the church, gradually falling off and taken away, either by an immature or a violent death; while there were but few who laid this matter to heart, and observed it as a preface of the judgment threatening the church. This stupidity he sadly deplores; immediately subjoining, however, an alleviation to shew (ver. 2.) that this complaint pertained not to the deceased, as having attained a happier lot, and as blessed in this respect, that they were taken from the evils and calamities of their times. The completion of this prophecy, according to Vitringa, is to be sought in the latter end of the ninth, and in the following centuries; when the Papal power greatly prevailed, and the corruption of the church was as great as the persecution and troubles of the pious were many. Rev. vi. 9.

*Ver. 3. But draw near hither, &c.]* The prophet proceeds to exhibit the church, totally corrupt as it was, the good men being extinct or dispersed; so that they who remained of the faithful lay hid in solitary places; while the body of the church appeared like a dead carcase; not the true, but the *adulterous church*. This church is summoned before the judgment-seat of God, first to be convinced, and afterwards to be condemned for her crimes; which crimes are spoken of under the ideas common to the idolatry of the ancient church, though they refer to the spiritual idolatry of the Christian church. There is a remarkable poem of William of Malmesbury, who lived in the 12th century, setting forth the corrupt state of the church in his

time, which serves abundantly to shew how exactly this prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled in those times.

*Ver. 5. Slaying the children, &c.]* It is generally agreed, that the prophet in these words alludes to some detestable superstitious rite made use of in his times in the worship of idols, which some refer particularly to the sacrifices offered to Moloch, for which the valley of Hinnom is remarkably infamous. But, whatever the reference be, the passage must be understood metaphorically of the superstition and cruelties practised in the period of the Christian church referred to.

*Ver. 6. Among the smooth stones, &c.]* *Among the smooth stones of the valley is thy portion; these, these are thy lot: Even to these hast thou poured out thy libation, hast thou presented thine offering. Can I see these things with acquiescence?* Vitringa thinks that the meaning of the first clause is, "They shall be thrown into the deep and low valleys, where they perform the execrable rites above-mentioned, and shall there perish."

*Ver. 8. Behind the doors, &c.]* *Thy remembrance, or memorial, signifies, thy idol.* "thy tutelary image, which at going in and out thou mayest adore." The reader will continue to bear in mind, that the ideas are here all taken from the expression of ancient times. See Rev. ii. 14—20.

*Ver. 9. And thou wentest to the king with ointment]* According to the interpretation which we have heretofore given, the king of mystical Babel, or the Pope, must be meant, to whom the particulars in this verse very aptly pertain, as they who are acquainted with the history of that anti-Christian monarch will easily discern. See Rev. xviii. 13, &c.

*Ver. 10. Thou hast found the life of thine hand, &c.]* That is to say, "Thou hast found thy delight in that troublesome superstition; wherefore, though thou mayest labour grievously, yet thou sustaineest all the trouble of it, because

all away; vanity shall take *them*: but he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain;

14 And shalt say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people.

15 For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

16 For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls *which* I have made.

17 For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart.

18 I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners.

19 I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to *him that is* far off, and to *him that is* near, saith the LORD; and I will heal him.

20 But the wicked *are* like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

21 *There is* no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

“because this superstition satisfies thy desire.” Kimchi has it, *The life of thy strength*, for the *hand* is in man the instrument of labour, which is employed in superstition. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 14. And shalt say, &c.] And he said, or, And a voice says, &c.* These are the words of the prophetic chorus, relating that a *voice* had gone forth, or a command of God, to prepare the way, and to remove all stumbling-blocks from it; that is to say, to reform the church from that state of corruption which is described in the preceding verses; a work of as great difficulty as importance, and the prediction whereof well deserved to be introduced in the sublime manner that we here find it. The reformation of the church from Popish error and superstition is an event too well known, and too highly valued, to need speaking of in this place. As an instance of the stumbling-blocks removed from the church, the reader may consult the *hundred grievances* proposed to Pope Adrian by the princes of Germany in the year 1523; when the faith was purged from errors, and the light of the Gospel restored to the Christian world. See Vitringa.

*Ver. 15. For thus saith the high and lofty One]* This exquisite sentence is not difficult to be understood, though it is not easy to comprehend its whole force and energy. It may be connected either with what precedes, or with what follows after. If with the former, a reason is given why God brought in a reformation after so long a delay; namely, that he might not seem wholly to have neglected the pious, and such as sincerely lamented the offences and evils of their times; when, on the contrary, he held them most dear, and was willing to comfort them, as being those alone whom he would truly *inhabit* and acknowledge for his people. If it be connected with the latter, it teaches that God, in his severity, might justly punish the corrupted church for the abuse of his word and grace; and destroy it by his judgments, as adulterous, and having broken his covenant. But as abounding in grace and mercy, and knowing that many remained in it who were drawn imprudently into error, and who, being admonished of their error,

would by the grace of his spirit return to him in true repentance and godly sorrow, he had determined to have regard to these, as it is peculiar to his nature to shew mercy and favour, and to revive these *humble and contrite ones*, by his comforts, and the hope of grace. The latter seems the preferable interpretation.

*Ver. 17, 18. For the iniquity of his covetousness]* In order to reclaim a wandering and carnal people, we are here told that God had applied the rod of his chastising judgments, which yet however had produced no good effect, for that the people had still turned backward from God, and departed more and more from him: so that now they were either to be wholly forsaken and given up to the severity of judgment, or to be succoured and given up to the extraordinary grace; and the latter is that which God in great mercy chooses. The *mourners* here spoken of, mean those true believers, who lamented the scandals and offences of the church in their times, under which they grievously suffered; such as the Waldenses, the Lollards, &c.

*Ver. 19. I create the fruit of the lips, &c.]* The meaning is, “that God would raise up at this time, by his grace, “preachers of the pure and genuine Gospel;” who, after the example of the apostolic times, should powerfully preach that genuine and evangelical truth, which brings *peace* and tranquillity to troubled consciences, reconciliation of God with the believing sinner, through the blood of Jesus Christ; and is therefore emphatically called, *the Gospel of peace*. This preaching of theirs should extend far and wide, and should pertain to all people and nations without distinction; and by this means the church should be truly healed and restored. See Ephes. ii. 17. vi. 15.

*Ver. 20, 21. But the wicked, &c.]* Hence we learn, that the church at this time should be divided into two parties: besides the humble and penitent confessors of truth, there should be the wicked; those who were void of true righteousness; and, rejecting the righteousness of justification offered to them by the Gospel, obstinately persisting in their old superstition and idolatry, laboured to the utmost of their power to extinguish the rising light of the

## C H A P. LVIII.

*The prophet, being sent to reprove hypocrisy, expresseth a counterfeit fast, and a true: he declareth what promises are due unto godliness, and to the keeping of the sabbath.*

[Before Christ 699.]

**C**RY aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob

their sins.

2 Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.

3 Wherefore have we fasted, *say they*, and

the reformation; and who, while animated by the most vehement and diabolic affections, would night and day be employed in a restless search after counsels and devices to effect this end; unhappily enough for themselves, as being thus deprived of all true peace and consolation of mind. See Pl. x. 8—10. and Viringa.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, If the watchmen were blind and careless, no wonder the people were stupid and negligent, and disregarded the notices of Divine Providence.

1. *The righteous perisheth, and merciful men are taken away.* Death delivered them from their burdens, and God in mercy took them away from a wicked world. *Note*; Piety is no protection from death; nay, in times of persecution the righteous are most exposed. The first man that died, died a martyr.

2. It was a mark of great hardness of heart, and inattention to the calls of God, that *no man laid it to heart, nor considered it.* The removal of the righteous is a grievous loss to the church, and to the nation; a mark of God's displeasure, and a warning of approaching judgments; and they who hear not the rod and repent, will quickly feel its smart, and perish under the stroke.

3. The blessedness of the righteous in their removal is great; to them, to die is gain. They are *taken away from the evil to come*, as Noah into the ark, before the deluge rises: they see not the evil which is coming on a wicked world, but take their happy flight to the mansions prepared for them in glory. *He shall enter into peace, or, go in peace*; no fears dismay his dying hour; having seen the salvation of God, he departs with joy to the full possession of it, to enter that blest abode where sin, sorrow, and sufferings, shall never more disturb his repose. *They shall rest in their beds*: no bed so welcome to the weary, as that bed of dust, where the saints sweetly sleep in Jesus, and wait a joyful resurrection, *each one walking in his uprightness*; either such was their conduct upon earth, or such is now the state of their departed souls, delivered from the burden of the flesh, and joined to the spirits of just men made perfect; or, *before him*, admitted to the beatific vision and fruition of the blessed God.

2dly, We have a strong character drawn of the wicked above mentioned, who were well-pleased to be rid of the righteous that troubled them: and this may belong either to the Jews under their latter monarchs, especially Ahaz, in whose reign Isaiah lived; or to the apostate church of Rome, where all the idolatries of the heathen are revived, and, with the name of Christian, paganism is in a measure re-established.

1. They are summoned to God's bar. *Draw near hi-*

*ther*, to hear your fearful doom; and the title given them marks their character; *ye sons of the sorcerers, the seed of the adulterer and the whore, or who commit whoredom, children of transgression, a seed of falsehood*; the whore of Babylon, the sons of that idolatrous church, committing whoredom with her, given up to iniquity, embracing false doctrines, and propagating them. *Note*; The practice of sin is spiritually sorcery and adultery; it is a virtual contract with the Devil, and an open breach of our baptismal engagements.

2. The crimes alleged against them are produced, and they are many and aggravated.

[1.] Contempt of God and his warnings, in the persons of his ministers. They ridiculed the preachers, treated them with derision and scorn, and shewed them such insult and ill-manners, as themselves would have counted a flagrant injury, if done to the meanest of their servants whom they had sent with a message. *Note*; (1.) They who deliver faithfully God's message to a wicked world, may expect often to meet insult and reproach. (2.) When religion is in the case, they, who on other occasions pique themselves on their behaviour as gentlemen, here count ill-manners laudable, and esteem the ministers of God as excluded from the common right of civility. (3.) They who thus insolently treat God's servants, need well consider against whom they sport themselves: their master is not thus to be mocked with impunity.

[2.] Idolatry. They were mad upon their idols, and, as is the nature of vile affections, the more they are indulged, the more they are inflamed, and hurry men on to greater excesses. Under every green tree they had their images; and so besotted were they, that even their own children were not too dear to offer to them; for when a man is given up to his heart's lust, he becomes unnatural even to his own flesh and blood, and, to gratify his raging appetites, cares not what sufferings his children and family undergo. Innumerable were their idols: if they found in the streams of the valley a smooth stone, they set it up for worship, and valued it as their portion and inheritance; as the Papists do in respect to the images of their saints. *Should I receive comfort in these?* says God; no; they are his utter abhorrence. On the hills they have set up their bed, their idolatrous altars, and thither went up to offer sacrifice to their idols: alluding, it may be, to the city of Rome, the seat of idolatry, situate on seven hills; or to their high altars, where they celebrate their masses, yea, every house has its tutelary saint, as the heathen Lares and Penates. *Behind the doors also and the posts hast thou set up thy remembrance*; their images, crucifixes, and superstitious pictures; *for thou hast discovered thyself to another than me, or from me*; apostate from God's true worship, and prostituted

thou seeft not? *wherefore* have we afflicted our foul, and thou takeft no knowledge? Be-

hold, in the day of your faft ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours.

tuted to idolatry: *and art gone up*, openly and publicly without blushing, to these unhallowed altars. *Thou hast enlarged thy bed*, their idol temples; *and made thee a covenant with them*; joined in league with others like them, see Rev. xiii. 15—17. *Thou lovedst their bed where thou sawest it*; didst take delight in the places and altars for idolatrous worship, as Ahaz, 2 Kings, xvi. 10. or, *where thou sawest a statue*, didst fall down and worship it.

[3.] Their zeal to make profelytes to their idolatry. *Thou wentest to the king with ointment*, &c. Some refer this to the trust which the Jews reposed in the foreign assistance they courted; but it may be applied to Rome the mother of harlots, who, decking herself with all the pomp and splendor of outward devotion and gaudy worship, invites the kings of the earth to commit fornication with her; *and didst increase thy perfumes*, to make herself appear amiable; pretending to antiquity, infallibility, the power of miracles, and authority to bestow plenary indulgences for sin: *and didst send thy messengers far off*; nuncios and legates to courts of her kings, to establish her authority, and missionaries and emissaries to promote her interests, and spread her false religion: *and didst debase thyself even unto hell*; making pretences to the deepest humility, in order to ensnare the unwary; or, *didst bring low even to hell*; making her converts seven-fold more the children of hell than before, and destroying the souls of those whom she pretended to save.

[4.] Their obstinate perseverance in those ways of wickedness. *Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way*, or, *the multiplicity of thy ways*, the many stratagems and the vast pains taken to compass the subjection of kingdoms, and all churches to the church of Rome, which were enough to have wearied out invention and patience, before they could be brought to take effect. *Yet saidst thou not, There is no hope*; no disappointments deterred the Roman see from persevering in her ambitious designs, till at last they prevailed. *Thou hast found the life of thine hand*, the dominion over men's consciences, and over all other churches, which they sought, with all the wealth that thence accrued: *therefore thou wast not grieved, or sick*; not sorry for the pains bestowed, or sick of the undertaking, whence they hoped at last all their pains would be recompensed. And this may be applied to sinners in general: [1.] The happiness that they seek in creature-comforts wearies them in the pursuit, and ever disappoints their expectations. [2.] Though experience should teach him, by repeated disappointment, the vanity of the creature, so infatuated is the sinner, that he still entertains hopes, that in time he shall find the joy he pursues. [3.] Sometimes he flatters himself that he has attained his point, and says to his soul, Take thine ease; but most fatally is he then deluded, when most securely he cries, Peace, peace.

[5.] Long impunity had bred confidence of its continuance, notwithstanding the repeated provocations given. *Of whom hast thou been afraid or feared?* intimating, either that she had cast off all fear of God, or that it was through fear of losing her influence over her votaries; *that thou hast lied*, stopped at no fraud and falsehood to carry her

point: *and hast not remembered me*; paid no regard to God, nor shewed any apprehension of his judgments. *Have not I held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not?* or, *therefore thou fearest not*; emboldened to sin by the patience that God had thown in bearing her provocations. *Note*; (1.) Fear of men often leads to the sin of lying. (2.) They can have no fear of God, who dare tell a deliberate lie. (3.) Because vengeance is not speedily executed on evil workers, presumptuous sinners harden themselves in their iniquities.

3. God threatens to bring them to an awful reckoning, to detect their hypocrisy, and visit them for their sins. *I will declare thy righteousness*; for this the Jews boasted of, and went about to establish; as the church of Rome also vaunts her purity, teaching the meritoriousness of men's duties with God, and even pretends to works of supererogation: but these pretences shall quickly be confuted and confounded, either by the preaching of the pure Gospel, as at the reformation, and hereafter, when the Romish hierarchy shall be destroyed; or at God's bar of judgment; for then it will appear how vain is their plea; *they shall not profit thee*, cannot justify them before God, nor in any measure secure them from his wrath, which shall be revealed from heaven against all such false pretenders to merit and human claims before God. *Note*; (1.) No delusion is more fatal than the conceit of our own righteousness for acceptance before God. (2.) The doctrine of the merit of works is the grand pillar of popery: would to God the heavens were not still deeply spread in many a Protestant's heart!

3dly, We have,

1. The vanity of idols in the day of calamity. *When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee*; but utterly unable will they be found to help. The sinner's confidences will then fail him; *the wind, or lightest breath of air, shall carry them all away*; the works of the self-righteous will all prove at the bar of God altogether lighter than vanity itself.

2. The insufficiency of idols and creature-confidences serves to magnify the all-sufficiency of God, which will never disappoint those who make him their rock alone. *He that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain*; which refers either to the restoration of the Jews to their own land from Babylon, or, spiritually, contains a promise of blessing to all the faithful, who shall inherit the heavenly Canaan, and come to the eternal mount of God in glory. *Note*; Abiding faith in God is the surest way to secure a blessed portion in time and eternity.

3. Proclamation is made to prepare the way for the return of the captive Jews; or this may be considered as the call of God by his ministers to his people, to come out of Babylon mystical; or, more generally, to depart from all the ways of sin. *He shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way*, that it may be plain and straight, for such is God's way; *a highway, a way of holiness; the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein*; and to this way it is the business of the spiritual guide to conduct men's souls. *Take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people*: labour to point

out

4 Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high.

out the difficulties that are in the way of God's people, and to extricate them out of all their troubles by the best advice which can be drawn from the oracles of God.

4. The humble and contrite shall find the power and love of God engaged for them. *For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity*, in the contemplation of whose transcendent perfections, greatness and glory, our thoughts are lost in wonder and adoration, *whose name is Holy*, essentially so in himself, the source of holiness to all his creatures, and whose works and ways are so ordered, as most eminently to display this adorable perfection; *I dwell in the high and holy place*; heaven is his throne, where he is pleased to make the brightest manifestations of his presence, and whither we are taught to look up to him: yet, not confined to the skies, he fills heaven and earth, and condescends to take up his favoured abode *with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit*; cheering and comforting the soul of the sinner abased with the views of guilt, and healing with his precious grace the heart broken under a sense of sin; supporting his afflicted ones oppressed and persecuted of men; and, as their tribulations abound, making their consolations abound also: *to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones*, that they may not sink under their burdens, or faint in despair, but by faith and patience bear up under their trials, and cheerfully and steadily hold on their heavenly way. Vitringa particularly applies this to the sufferings of the Waldenses and Bohemians, so cruelly persecuted by the Pope and his adherents; and others, to the latter days, when the anti-christian powers prevail. *Note*; (1.) An humble and contrite spirit is among the best gifts of God. (2.) There is an endeared communion to be enjoyed with God, which only they can tell, in whose hearts he is pleased to manifest himself as he does not unto the world. (3.) Where God dwells, no evil can approach, no real good be absent.

5. Though God in merciful correction visits his people, he will quickly remove the rod, when in humiliation the soul bows down before it. *For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wrath*, as the broken heart is ready to fear; but his anger is only for a moment towards them who lie at the footstool of his throne in true contrition; like a tender father, whose bowels yearn even when he chastises his child, so doth the Lord haste to end his controversy with his humbled contrite people, ready to pardon them instantly at their sincere cry, and to support them under, or save them out of, all their troubles: *for the spirit should fail before me, or be overwhelmed, and the souls which I have made*; which God gives as a reason for his compassions: he knows our weakness, and, if we humbly depend upon him, will not lay upon us more than we can bear. *Note*; Our souls are God's, not merely by creation, but much more by redemption and regeneration.

4thly, We have reproofs, promises, and warnings, according to the several states of the people to whom the prophecy is addressed; and they are levelled either against the Jews of that day, or those sad declensions among Christians, for which God for a while in anger suffers the man of sin to prevail against them.

1. Their covetousness was among their crying sins; spiritual as well as corporal idolatry defiled them: they prized gold more than God, and gain than godliness; therefore God was wroth, sold them into the hands of the Chaldeans, and seemed for a while utterly to turn away from them. And this is remarkably the prominent sin of too many ministers in protestant churches, who, while they are only seeking their own advantage and preferment, are losing the souls of their people, seduced by the emissaries of popery; and for this God hath a controversy against them. *Note*; (1.) Covetousness, though covered with many a specious guise, is a sin which God peculiarly abhors, and in ministers of the Gospel is most peculiarly criminal. (2.) God's wrath, however little feared, will be proved terrible where it falls.

2. Their hearts were obstinate, and, instead of being reformed by their afflictions, *they went on frowardly*; fretting against the Lord, instead of falling low at his footstool; and persisting in the way of their covetousness, instead of returning from it. *Note*; The wicked heart of man is often made more furious by restraint; and the severest afflictions are ineffectual to humble him.

3. God's mercy triumphs over their perverseness. We might well have expected to have heard him say, *I have seen thy ways, and will destroy thee*: but lo! the very reverse; *I have seen his ways and will heal him*, all who will penitently return to him. We cannot help ourselves by our natural powers; our nature is utterly corrupt; unless divine grace interpose, we are undone for ever. This God sees and knows; therefore he offers a free pardon, and is willing, by the powerful influences of his Spirit, to convert our souls, heal their inveterate diseases, and draw us powerfully that we may follow him. *I will lead him also*, all who thus follow him, in the paths of righteousness for my name's sake, and hold up his goings in the way; *and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners*, brought to a deep and humbling sense of their guilt, and, though once hardened, now by divine grace melted down with sorrow and shame: God will therefore bind up their bleeding wounds, speak comfortably to their souls, and wipe every tear from their eyes. *Note*; (1.) It is a blessed symptom for good, when the soul begins to mourn over sin. (2.) We must ascribe the glory to God, that our stubborn souls are ever brought to see and lament the evil of our ways. (3.) They who sow in tears, are sure to reap in joy.

4. The comfort that God will restore arises especially from a sense of the peace and reconciliation made between him and the sinner. *I create the fruit of the lips*; God gives both the cause for thanksgiving to those who earnestly seek him, and opens the heart and lips to speak his praise. *Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord*; peace with God, peace of conscience, peace from all enemies, peace present and eternal to every faithful soul: and to this the apostle seems to refer, Eph. ii. 17. and applies it to the preaching of the apostles, when not only the Jews, but the distant Gentile lands, heard the Gospel of peace, found pardon through the blood of the cross, and were joined in one body, holding the unity of the spirit in



5 Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? *is it* to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes *under him*? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD?

6 *Is* not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?

7 *Is it* not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou see the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh.

8 ¶ Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy reward.

the bond of peace: *and I will heal him*; recovering them from all their sins and backslidings, restoring them to a state of purity, and healing all their divisions. *Note*; (1.) None can speak peace to the troubled soul, till God create that fruit of the lips, and make the word of Gospel-grace in the mouth of his servants effectual to the sincere mourner. (2.) All who are restored to peace with God, from that moment begin to experience the sanctifying influences of his grace.

5. The impenitently wicked will finally perish. They *are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest*; agitated by the winds of raging passion, tossed to and fro with the struggles of vile affections and jarring corruptions, and frequently restless under the terrifying apprehensions of the wrath which is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men: *whose waters cast up mire and dirt*; foaming out their own shame, polluting and defiling in their conversation, and all their comforts rendered bitter and loathsome by the curse of God which mingles with them. *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked*; no peace with God, no true peace of conscience, no peace in death, no peace in eternity; but the wrath of God abideth on them.

CHAP. LVIII.

THE seventh section, contained in this and ver. 1—15. of the following chapter, is divided into two reproofs; the former of which contains, *first*, a redargutory, and *secondly*, a doctrinal part, subservient to the redargutory one. In the former we have, *first*, the voice or command of God to his faithful ministers to convict his nominal people of the manifest vices prevailing among them, ver. 1. *Secondly*, the argument of this reproof, where the state of the people is described with respect to their external worship and regard for religion, ver. 2. and with regard to the opinion which, hypocritical as they were, they held respecting this worship, particularly their fasts, ver. 3. *Thirdly*, a reproof adapted to this argument; in which God sets before the people the faults committed in their worship, and particularly in their fasts: middle of ver. 3—5. In the doctrinal part God declares, by three particulars, the true method of worshipping him, and of observing fasts, and subjoins the benefits and privileges of grace which should attend this true and proper worship. *First* article, ver. 6—9.; the *second*, middle of ver. 9—12.; the *third*, ver. 13, 14. In the latter reproof the faithful teachers of the church first demonstrate that the miserable

state of the oppressed people is not owing to God, but that the true cause of it is their own sins and vices; chap. lix. ver. 1, 2. *Secondly*, they enumerate particularly those crimes and vices; ver. 3—8. Then follows a lamenting and supplicatory part, setting forth the consequences of those vices; wherein the calamitous state of the church, reduced to extremity, and deluded with vain hopes, is described, ver. 9—11.; and the same is repeated in a confessional supplication to God. There is nothing very difficult in this section, which is connected with that preceding, as the nature of the event is also connected; while, as before, though the prophecy relates to the times of Christianity, the ideas are taken from the state of things under the old œconomy. The object of the prophecy, says Vitringa, is the people of the new œconomy, after the beginning of the reformation, declining from their profession, and falling from their first faith.

*Ver. 2. Yet they—that did righteousness, and forsook not*] *But they—as a nation that doeth righteousness, and forsaketh not.*

*Ver. 3. Behold, &c.*] “You gratify your passions, especially your covetousness: you oppress the poor, and therefore are defective in the duties of justice and charity.” By *labours* are meant those riches which are gotten by the toil and fatigue of ourselves or others; and by *exacting our labours*, in the style of the Mosaic law, is meant, the rigorous insisting upon payment, where the debtor is unable to make it. The next verse fully explains this clause; and no reader can fail to admire the subsequent part of this chapter, wherein the prophet sets forth, in the fullest manner possible, the vanity of all external and formal professions in religion, unaccompanied by genuine holiness, virtue, and undissembled love and charity.

*Ver. 4. Ye shall not fast, &c.*] *Ye fast not this day, so as to make your voice [or prayers] to be heard above.* *Ver. 5. Is it such a fast as I should choose, a day, &c.*

*Ver. 8. Then shall thy light, &c.*] *Then* [that is to say, if thou shalt join these acts of love and beneficence to thy fasting and religious worship] *thy light, &c.* that is to say, “Thou shalt in a short time obtain the happy state which thou hast desired, and shalt also be delivered from the evils which oppress thee, and be entirely restored. Thou shalt have God for thy defender and protector, and in all thy prayers and vows, (ver. 9.) shalt find him propitious, and ready to hear thee.” Instead of, ארזכהה *arukatheka*, *thy health*, Vitringa reads, *thy recovery*. The idea at the end of the verse is taken from an army, the rear of which is particularly

9 Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;

10 And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day:

11 And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

12 And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

13 ¶ If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words:

14 Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the

particularly guarded and defended from any attack; or perhaps the allusion may be to the pillar of fire which attended the Israelites in their march through the wilderness.

Ver. 9. *The putting forth of the finger*] That is, says Grotius, "If thou shalt cease with the finger of contempt to mark out good men, and to mock and despise their simplicity and sincerity." In this and the subsequent verses, the prophet elegantly repeats and enlarges upon what he had delivered in the former period.

Ver. 12. *And they—shall build, &c.*] The meaning is, (for the whole of this and the preceding verse is metaphorical,) that from the city of God, flourishing in the manner above described, should go forth those who should renew and restore the churches long laid waste, as immersed in thick darkness and superstition, and governed by faithless pastors, and so unworthy the name of the churches of God; and who should collect together, erect, and build anew the foundations of those churches; that is to say, the heads of Christian doctrine delivered by the prophets and apostles, which, though they had retained them in the confession of their faith, they had mixed with heterogeneous doctrines; so that they might be esteemed as wholly subverted and overthrown. *And thou shalt be called*, says the prophet, *the repairer of the breach, &c.* as much as to say, "Thou shalt be truly called, or become a reformed church." See ch. ix. 14. and compare ch. xlix. 8. and liv. 3.

Ver. 13. *If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, &c.*] Vitringa renders this, *If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, so as not to study thy pleasure on my holy day, but callest, &c.* The meaning is, "If on the sabbath thou shalt abstain from running up and down, from the ordinary occupation and business of human life, in search of profit or pleasure, &c. ver. 14. *Then, &c.*" For the observation of the sabbath requires rest and spiritual exercise, as the prophet finely teaches us in the subsequent part of this verse; in which he sets forth, in the strongest and most explicit terms, the manner wherein the sabbath-day should be honoured. The *foot* in Scripture is frequently used for all the labour and business of men: see Prov. iv. 26, 27. Psal. cxix. 101. and chap. lvi. 2.

Ver. 14. *Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord*] From the benefits consequent upon the duty, which are spiritual, we may collect the duty itself. It was enjoined in the 13th verse, *to call the sabbath a delight*; in return for which *delight in the Lord*, sincere and spiritual delight is promised. The meaning of the next promise seems to be, that God would give his church the perfect possession of the inheritance of the world; of those states and kingdoms which had hitherto opposed it; and would subject them to it in faith. See Psal. xxxvii. 34. This prophesy certainly glances at the universal spread of righteousness in the latter days.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, A commission is given to the prophet to remonstrate against the iniquity and hypocrisy of the people.

1. He is commanded to be earnest and bold in the discharge of his office. *Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet.* Sinners are dull of hearing; they need sons of thunder to spread the dire alarm of their danger; and ministers who would be faithful to their trust must be free, bold, and earnest in their reproofs, and accept no man's person: *and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins*, in which, notwithstanding their pious professions, they lived; and which, distinctly and particularly, God's ministers must charge home upon their consciences, particularly their formality, self-dependence, and hypocrisy.

2. Their pretences to religion must not impose upon him; they were but an aggravation of their guilt, and called for a sharper rebuke. *Yet they seek me daily*; affect to appear solicitous in the ordinances of worship; make it their constant practice to attend their devotions public and private: *and delight to know my ways*; in appearance, take pleasure in attending the most powerful and faithful preachers, and desire to furnish their understandings with right sentiments of religion; *as a nation that did righteousness*; they would fain appear righteous unto men; *and forsook not the ordinance of their God*, to whose favour they made a strong claim, and joined in the exercise of worship, praying, reading, singing, communicating. *They ask of me the ordinances of justice*; inquiring of God's ministers, and  
in

high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

in their prayers testifying an earnest concern to know the right way, and walk in it. *They take delight in approaching to God*; pleased with their own services, and either counting them meritorious in the eye of God, or expecting from them men's esteem and admiration. *Note*; (1.) The most detestable character before God is the hypocrite. (2.) How far, how very far may men go, to appearance, in the way to heaven, even to be admired and envied for their gifts and piety! and yet in fact be only sacrificing to their own drag, and so much nearer the belly of hell.

2dly, Because these hypocrites had so many good things to say of themselves, they are,

1. Reproved as expostulating with God for paying no more regard to them. Having a high opinion of themselves, their doings and duties, they would fain have God express the like approbation of them. *Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?* *Note*; (1.) There are those who fast and afflict their souls from a principle of pride and self-righteousness, as well as others who do it from a spirit of real humiliation. (2.) Many flatter themselves that God will reward the services which he in fact abhors. (3.) Nothing more highly exasperates those who value themselves on their own goodness, than to have the vanity of their self-dependence shown them, and the folly of their hopes detected.

2. The hypocrisy of their duties is rebuked. If God disregarded them, he had abundant cause to do so. They found pleasure and prided themselves in their fasts, as if they were more righteous than others; they exacted all their labours, rigorous and severe with their servants, and unrelenting toward their poor debtors. *They fasted for strife and debate*, appointing these solemn seasons to perpetuate divisions among each other, by pretending to cast the cause of their national afflictions on other's sins, instead of their own; or making their fast-days occasions of strife and debate, when and how they should be observed; and to smite with the fists of wickedness, oppressing and ill-using their poor insolvent debtors, while they pretended to be humbling their souls for their own offences before God. *Ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high*, either clamorous against their debtors, or threatening their servants, or disputing with each other, or with their pompous and loud devotions affecting extraordinary piety: *Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul?* the mere work of abstaining from meat for a few hours, while the heart continues utterly unhumbled and unrenewed? *Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush? and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?* Is this enough,—to make a parade of the external tokens of pretended humiliation? *wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?* can it be possible, that he should be pleased with or approve of such a farce of religious ceremony? No, God trieth the heart, hateth falsehood and hypocrisy, and will not accept the services of feigned lips. *Note*; To pretend a zeal for religion, and live in the indulgence of iniquity, is vile hypocrisy, and the sure way to destroy our own souls.

3. God prescribes the true nature of a religious fast. He wills that the soul should be afflicted for sin, while the body is humbled in the dust; and, as the surest proof of it, that there be a change wrought in our lives. *Is not this the fast that I have chosen, to loose the bands of wickedness?* in general, to break off from every known sin, from every wicked combination; to undo the heavy burdens from the poor servant, who groaned under unreasonable commands, or from the poor debtor loaded with chains, who had really nothing to pay, and to let the oppressed go free, obtaining his discharge from vexatious suits, or hard servitude, and that ye break every yoke, no more enslaving or harassing their brethren. *Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry?* whom want compels to many a fast, and who need the bread which in our fulness we are called to deny ourselves; and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house, those who shiver in the cold, and have no covering, or the poor refugees that suffer persecution, as the word may be rendered, for conscience-sake, and are driven from their own homes. *When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him;* not say, Be warm, be filled; and yet give him not the things he needs, but clothe him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh, not only those near relatives who have the first claim to our bounty, but esteeming every man a brother, as of the same blood, and especially those of the household of faith. *Note*; (1.) If any man seeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? (2.) They who have the deepest sense of the divine charity of Jesus to them, will ever be the most ready to open their hearts and their hands to relieve the distresses of others.

3dly, They who walk in the ways of grace, will ever find them paths of blessedness. We have,

1. The gracious conduct enjoined. *If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, abstaining from every oppression and severity towards their brethren, and labouring, as far as their influence and authority prevail, to restrain it in others; the putting forth of the finger, either as a mark of threatening or correction, or as a token of contempt and derision, and speaking vanity, hypocritical addresses to God, flattering speeches to men, or falsehood and lying in their dealings one with another? And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, not only relieving their wants, but expressing for them the tenderest compassion, which doubly enhances the favour; and satisfy the afflicted soul, whatever be the causes of his distress, kindly affording him every assistance for his body or soul; then God will remember these works of faith and labours of love.* *Note*; The world is full of objects of compassion; we shall not want opportunity, if we do not want a heart to do good.

2. Many and rich blessings are promised to those who thus walk in love, and live to be useful.

[1.] God will remember them in the day of affliction, and cause their light to shine. *Then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day*; out of every trouble God would deliver them. Swiftly as the morning breaks, and pleasingly as the rising sun dispels the shadows of the night, so should their light break forth; their comfort,

## C H A P. LIX.

*The damnable nature of sin. The sins of the Jews. Calamity is for sin. Salvation is only of God. The covenant of the Redeemer.*

[Before Christ 699.]

**B**EHOOLD, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither

fort, credit, and prosperity, shining more and more unto the perfect day; and *thine health shall spring forth speedily*; if they were afflicted in body or soul, the affliction should be removed. *Note*; They will be no losers who lend unto the Lord, by relieving his people in distress; he will repay, nay, over-pay them for their kindness.

[2.] The Lord will be their protector and guide; *thy righteousness shall go before thee*, as the evidence of their fidelity; and *the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward*, or *shall gather thee*: as a strong body of troops, that protects the rear, and gathers up the stragglers that none be lost, so the Lord will preserve them safe in all their ways, and magnify his own glory in their salvation. *The Lord shall guide thee continually*, by his word, Spirit, and providences, and this continually, night and day, lest any hurt them. *Note*; They are happy indeed, who see the infinite merit of the Redeemer as their acceptance before God, and the glory of God engaged for their support.

[3.] All their prayers shall be heard and answered. *Thou shalt call and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am*, a very present help in trouble; while they are speaking, he will hear; he will be near them when affrighted they cry to him; and he is ready to do more and better for them than they are able to ask or think. *Note*; If we have so great, so kind a friend ever at hand, so willing, so able to help us, let us never neglect to apply to him, and then who can harm us?

[4.] God will supply all their wants, spiritual and temporal: *He will satisfy thy soul in drought*, when the lions lack and suffer hunger, they shall be fed; or when thirsting in this barren land for Christ, the water of life, for his grace, for his presence and Spirit, he will refresh them; and *make fat thy bones*, giving them plenty, or rather comforting and strengthening the souls of his people, and causing them to increase with the increase of God. *And thou shalt be like a watered garden*, adorned with divine graces as a garden blooming with beauty, breathing fragrance, and laden with the choicest fruits, and *like a spring of water, whose waters fail not*, the heavenly principle of grace deeply implanted and continually springing up.

[5.] They shall be honoured as the instruments of building up the church of God; and *they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places*, which may refer to those of the Jews, who, on their return from Babylon, restored the cities, and especially Jerusalem, which had lain in ruins, or to those whom God will employ in the Gospel to build up *the waste places of the world*, as the words *חרבות עולם* *chareboth olam*, may be rendered, the whole earth having been covered with the desolations of ignorance and sin, till by the preaching of the word the Gentiles were converted, and Christian societies established; and *thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations*,

his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:

2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that ye will not hear.

3 For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips

as when the temple was raised from its rubbish, so shall the church of Christ, in the latter days, rise beautiful and glorious, and continue to increase till the reign of Christ be universally established: and *thou shalt be called the repairer of the breach*, and *the restorer of paths to dwell in*; they shall be honoured by those who have been called through their ministry; the breaches which abounding iniquity had made shall be repaired, all divisions healed, and by their means the paths of truth and holiness become happily frequented.

4thly, A serious and conscientious observance of the sabbath-day, is one of the best evidences and surest means of having the heart devoted to God.

1. The sanctification of this day is described. *If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath*, from trampling upon it, by profane neglect, making it a day of travelling, idleness, or visiting; *from doing thy pleasure on my holy-day*, not making it a day of vain amusements, or spending it in those recreations which at another season may be lawful; and *call the sabbath a delight*, welcoming its return with gladness, counting these sacred hours the happiest portions of our time, and spending them with joy in his blessed service of prayer, praise, meditation, godly conversation, &c. *the holy of the Lord*, respecting its divine institution; and *honourable*, employing ourselves in it, as may most conduce to advance the honour and glory of God; and *shalt honour him* who appointed this day of rest, *not doing thine own ways* in any secular business or the work of common days; *nor finding thine own pleasure*, turning it into a day of sauntering, diversion, or vanity; *nor speaking thine own words*, the thoughts of this world, and the cares of it should be banished from our minds, and all our conversation be employed about the things of God, and how we may secure to ourselves a part in his eternal rest.

2. The benefit of such an improvement of the Lord's day will be great; for, *then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord*; abundant consolation will be the blessed fruit; and clearer discoveries of the riches of the grace and love of Christ be made to the soul; so that by experience we shall say, One day in thy courts is better than a thousand; and *I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth*, in safety from every enemy, exalted to honour; or, spiritually, to live above the earth, and have our conversation in heaven, enjoying the comfort and dignity of being sons of God: and *feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father*, with all the blessings of the covenant of promise, and the foretastes of eternal bliss, more precious than the richest provision of Canaan, the heritage of Israel: *for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it*, and therefore we may confidently trust him, for he will never disappoint the hopes of those who perseveringly place their dependence upon him. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his word shall never pass away until the whole be fulfilled.

CHAP.

have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness.

4 None calleth for justice, nor *any* pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.

5 They hatch cockatrice' eggs, and weave the spider's web: he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper.

6 Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works *are* works of iniquity, and the act of violence *is* in their hands.

7 Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts *are* thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction *are* in their paths.

8 The way of peace they know not; and *there is* no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.

9 Therefore is judgment far from us, nei-

ther doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, *but* we walk in darkness.

10 We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if *we had* no eyes; we stumble at noon-day as in the night; *we are* in desolate places as dead *men*.

11 We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but *there is* none; for salvation, *but* it is far off from us.

12 For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions *are* with us; and *as for* our iniquities, we know them;

13 In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.

14 And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.

15 Yea, truth faileth; and he *that* departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the

#### CHAP. LIX.

*Ver. 1, 2. Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened*] The prophet here teaches, that the reason why God does not exert his power for the avenging of his people, is not because *his hand is shortened*, but because he doth not hear their prayers; that he does not hear, not because his ear is grown heavy, but because an intermediate cloud, namely, of their sins, hinders his face from being seen by them in favour, or their prayers from being heard or regarded by him: as much as to say, "The reason of the continuance of your calamities is not want either of power in God to deliver you, or of goodness to hear your prayers; but your iniquities render him a stranger to you, and stop the course of his blessings." See Vitringa.

*Ver. 3—8. For your hands are defiled*] The prophet here goes on to specify those iniquities which he had mentioned in general, and in such an order, that he distributes them, as it were, through the members of the human body; the hands, the mouth, the feet; dwelling longest, however, upon the faults committed by the mouth; which are set forth literally and properly, *first*, in the middle of ver. 3, 4. and then figuratively, ver. 5, 6. The meaning of the expression, *They hatch cockatrice' eggs*, is, "Their wicked designs are like the eggs of a cockatrice, rank poison, which, when hatched, produce a venomous serpent: they end in destruction and misery." The expression of *weaving the spider's web*, signifies, "They attempt things, which meet with no success." See Job, viii. 14. The 4th verse may be rendered, *No one pleadeth in righteousness, &c.* In ver. 8. instead of *there is*

*no judgment in their goings*, Vitringa reads, *there is no regard to right in their goings*.

*Ver. 9—11. Therefore is judgment far from us*] After an enumeration of the grievous sins and offences which deformed the church, the company of the faithful ministers of Jesus Christ, and the remaining true believers of the church, burst forth into a bitter complaint in these verses, and in the subsequent ones humbly confess their deplorable state before God. In either part the miserable and afflicted state of the church is supposed; and the most fatal consequences are apprehended, unless God should interpose with immediate help; concerning which we shall see more in the 16th and following verses. The present verse may be rendered, *Therefore is remedy, redress, or vindication, far from us, neither does deliverance reach, or come at us*. The subsequent expressions in these verses are metaphorical, and denote a state of the utmost confusion and perplexity, of peril and solicitude. In ver. 11. for *judgment* we may read *vindication*.

*Ver. 14. Truth is fallen in the street*] *Truth falleth down in the forum, or the judicatures, &c.*

*Ver. 15. And the Lord saw it, &c.*] The eighth section is comprised in the remainder of this chapter; wherein we have, *first*, the most *afflicted state of the church*, destitute of all human help, ver. 15.—middle of 16. *secondly*, the *deliverance* to be procured for it by the Son of God, its protector and avenger; where, *first*, the deliverer of the church is described as a hero, completely armed to take vengeance; middle of ver. 16, 17. *secondly*, the vengeance itself to be executed by him, and the manner of it, ver. 18. *thirdly*,

LORD saw it, and it displeased him that *there was* no judgment.

16 ¶ And he saw that *there was* no man, and wondered that *there was* no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him.

17 For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak.

18 According to *their* deeds, accordingly

he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompence.

19 So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him.

20 ¶ And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD.

21 As for me, this is my covenant with

*thirdly*, the joyful consequences of this deliverance. *First*, the conversion of the Gentiles, from east to west, ver. 19. *secondly*, the destruction of other enemies, who should oppose the church; middle of ver. 19. *thirdly*, the conversion of the Jews to their Redeemer in repentance and faith, ver. 20. *fourthly*, we have the foundation and seal of this benefit; ver. 21. See ch. lxiii. 5. St. Paul, in his epistle to the Ephesians, ch. vi. 14. seems to have borrowed his ideas from the 17th verse of this chapter.

Ver. 18. *According to their deeds*] *According to the height of their demerits, he will repay them to the height; fury to his adversaries, &c.*

Ver. 20. *And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, &c.*] It is remarkable, that the Hebrew word  $\text{גֹּאֲלֵךְ}$  *gōāl*, rendered Redeemer, properly signifies one who has a right to that office, on account of consanguinity. The application of this text therefore to Cyrus, is certainly improper, and one would wonder that so learned a man as Grotius could ever have made such an application. The LXX have avoided this impropriety by reading, *There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer or Redeemer, he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.* St. Paul cites the passage according to this version, Rom. xi. 26. and applies it as a prediction to the conversion of the Jews, *after the fulness of the Gentiles is come in.* The prophecy, says Bishop Chandler, is as yet unfulfilled; but the preservation of the Jews, who, though dispersed among all nations, still remain a separate people, seems to indicate, that they are preserved by God for this purpose, to be an illustrious instance of his goodness to them, and of the truth of the prophets. See his Defence, p. 365.

Ver. 21. *As for me, this is my covenant*] This memorable prediction is closed with a seal of the perfect love of God toward this new church, composed of Jews and Gentiles united together, and largely endowed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit; whereby he assures her, that she should never hereafter want either the efficacious influx of the Holy Spirit, for illumination and comfort, or the clear understanding of the doctrine of salvation to be abundantly illustrated at this time from the word of God; for that the darkness which in the former age had overwhelmed the church should be dispersed, the light so long wished for by the pious should arise, and this grace should continue with the church for ever. *Upon thee, and in thy mouth, signify the united people of Jews and Gentiles in*

the delivered and restored church. The change of number observable in this verse is very common with the prophets. This remarkable prophecy having not yet attained its full completion, we must wait till future time shall more fully discover to us its extent and meaning, as well as that of several others which are parallel to it, and which lead us to expect some mighty change in the state of the church, when, purified from its vices and corruptions, it will receive additional glory from the restoration of the Jews to their God and Saviour, and the entire conversion of the Gentile world, united with the Jews in one common service, and exhibiting such a state of things as the prophet beautifully represents in the subsequent chapter.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, They had complained before of God's inattention to their fasting and prayers: God here farther convinces them that the fault was in themselves.

1. It was their sins, not want of power or grace in him, which occasioned the continuance of their afflictions. *Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, he the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever; length of time, or strength of foes, makes no difference with him; neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear, they who cry to him in simplicity will find him ever near to answer and relieve them; if our prayers return not with a blessing, it is because we ask amiss, or grow weary and faint in our minds. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not bear: here is the grand obstacle; and, this remaining, how can we hope to succeed with him? See Pf. lxxvi. 18.* Note: (1.) Sin is the accursed thing which breeds all our sorrows: oh that we saw it in its true colours, and hated it as it deserves! (2.) It is in vain for us to hope for an answer of peace to our prayers, whilst allowed iniquity cuts off the intercourse between God and our souls.

2. God had charged them with sin in general; and afterwards many particulars are alleged, fully vindicating the divine procedure against them.

[1.] Their hearts were desperately wicked; *their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity, this is ever uppermost in their minds; they conceive mischief, as the embryo is formed in the womb, so in their hearts the purpose of sin ripens into act; and bring forth iniquity. They hatch cockatrice-eggs, and weave the spider's web; their schemes are curiously formed, with much art and labour, and, though they appear fair with-*

out,

them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor

out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.

out, they are big with poison and the most pernicious consequences. *He that eateth of their eggs dieth*; whoever credulously embraces the false doctrines they broach, or is seduced to follow the evil practices they patronize, brings upon himself swift destruction: *and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper*; either the foot which incautiously treads in the way of such, is in danger of being stung, or the very attempt to crush them is dangerous, as exposing those who do it to their malignity and persecution. *Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works*. They who believe their lies will be fatally disappointed, and be left naked before the wrath of God; as will particularly be the case of all who set up their own works and duties as the ground of their acceptance with God.

[2.] Out of the abundance of their heart, their mouth speaketh; *your lips have spoken lies, and your tongue hath muttered perverseness*; false and fraudulent in their dealings, backbiters and whisperers; or it may refer to the heretical tenets which they broached and openly supported, to the great ruin of men's souls.

[3.] Their actions corresponded with their evil hearts: *your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity*, either shed in passion, or under pretext of justice; or rather with the blood of martyrs, who, opposing their wicked ways, suffered for their fidelity. This left upon their conscience deep defilement, and cried for vengeance. *Their feet run to evil, eager in the pursuit and impatient to gratify their malice and revenge, they make haste to shed innocent blood: wasting and destruction are in their paths*: they spread desolations around them, ruining both body and soul, and their ways will conduct them at length to everlasting perdition.

[4.] All truth and justice are banished; *none calleth for justice*; the injured dare not complain, because power is with their oppressors, and none will interest themselves in their behalf, or see them righted: *nor any pleadeth for truth*, supporting the cause of oppressed innocence, or vindicating the truths of God from the errors and heresies with which these wicked men have obscured and perverted them. *They trust in vanity*, deceive themselves as well as others with false confidences; or they trust in lies, hoping, by bold and confident assertions, to carry the cause against truth and justice. *The way of peace they know not*; how should they, when all their thoughts, words, and deeds, are opposite to God and godliness; *and there is no judgment in their goings*, no justice in their dealings with men, no discernment of the right way before God, no apprehension of their own danger: *they have made them crooked paths*, all their ways are perverse before God; *whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace*, no true peace of conscience, or solid satisfaction; but misery, like their shadow, must attend them, and the wrath of God, present and eternal, abide upon them. *Note*; Many cry peace to their souls, whose ways inevitably lead to everlasting perdition.

2dly, Though in general there appears to have been a grievous departure from God, yet, in every age, a few faithful at least have been found; and these are repre-

sented confessing and bewailing the prevalent sins and misery of their people.

1. Their misery was great under the power of their oppressors. No justice could be obtained from man, and God in righteous judgment refused to vindicate their quarrel and execute vengeance on their foes. Their expectations were grievously disappointed; they waited for light, but behold obscurity, for brightness, or brightneses, some eminent interposition of God to rescue them from their afflictions, but we walk in darkness, in thickest darkness, their troubles increasing rather than diminishing, and their hopes sinking fast into black despair. Totally at a loss what way to direct their course, like blind men they groped for the wall; and, though they had God's word, as a light shining in a dark place, they neglected or misunderstood it, so that they stumbled at noon-day as in the night; they were ready to give up all for lost; in desolate places, dejected, and retiring to mournful solitudes to pour out their griefs, or in fastnesses, where they had abundant means of grace, yet not quickened by them: others render the word, באשמונים *baashmannim, in sepulchres, as dead men*, their state desperate and irrecoverable as that of the dead; under which calamities, bitter were their groanings, roaring as bears, or mourning as doves; they saw no prospect of deliverance, and God seemed to have utterly withdrawn from them his salvation. *Note*; (1.) When power is in the hands of oppressors, little justice can be expected. (2.) They who hope for the light of God's countenance, and yet walk in the way of iniquity, must needs be disappointed. (3.) None so blind as those who, in the midst of Gospel day, hate the light of truth: justly does God leave them to the darkness they have chosen. (4.) Sinners are ever swinging to extremes, in prosperity secure, in adversity despairing. (5.) When the mourning of the sufferer is more for his sins than his calamities, there is then hope of relief.

2. The pious, who in the name of the people lament their sufferings, confess their sins as the just cause of them: all the charges that God had brought against them are acknowledged to be altogether righteous and true. Their transgressions were many, great, and aggravated, especially as a professing people; for which their consciences condemned them, and which it were folly to attempt concealing from God, particularly in transgressing and lying against the Lord, being false to their vows, and faithless in breaking their allegiance to him, or misrepresenting his truth, as now is done, by robbing the Redeemer of the glories of his godhead, and denying his vicarious punishment and atonement: *and departing away from our God, from his commands, worship, and ordinances; speaking oppression and revolt*, not merely rebels themselves, but daring to utter their treasonable designs against God's honour and glory, in order to seduce others to join in their defection; and, where they have power, oppressing those who are zealous to oppose their false doctrines and pernicious ways, *conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood*, contriving how to propagate their errors, and earnest in maintaining them. Justice had ceased to exert herself, and truth was no longer regarded; by which all the bonds of civil

## CHAP. LX.

*The glory of the church in the abundant access of the Gentiles, and the great blessings after a short affliction.*

[Before Christ 698.]

**A**RISE, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.

civil society were dissolved; or it may respect the state of the decayed churches of protestantism, where the true doctrines of the Gospel are too generally exploded and trampled upon. Those who should be the first to see them maintained, are the chief apostates from them, while the few that remain true to the principles of free grace and genuine holiness through Jesus Christ, are oppressed without redress, and find no advocate, and the door of the ministry is shut against them. So that truth faileth, yea, and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey; when falsehood and iniquity are become fashionable, it is dangerous to be singular by being pious and holy; it ruins a man's interests in the world, and exposes him to the persecution of his brethren, who cannot bear the reproof of his words and ways, so opposite to their own; or, as the word *מִשְׁתוֹלֵל* *mishstolel*, may be rendered, is reckoned a madman, treated as an enthusiast, as melancholic, or disturbed in his senses, for such his conduct makes him appear to those, who, destitute of all zeal for God's glory themselves, and only anxious about worldly advantage, regard others, who act on principles so utterly different, as fools or madmen. *And the Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment; he observed it, and was justly displeased at the abounding iniquity, peculiarly criminal in a people professing godliness.*

3dly, We have heard how sin abounded; we shall now see how grace much more abounds.

1. God beheld their deplorable case with an eye of pity. *He saw that there was no man, none, comparatively speaking; for some few, as appears, lamented their unhappy case; but, in general, there was no man who cared to espouse the sinking cause of justice and truth, or laid to heart the evil of their ways: and wondered that there was no intercessor to stand in the gap, and plead, like Abraham for Sodom, if it were possible to avert the impending judgments. At this God is said to wonder; for, speaking after the manner of men, considering what means and mercies he had vouchsafed them, such a general apostacy was strange. Note; It is very bad with a nation, when her praying advocates cease, or are few; it is then to be feared that destruction is near.*

2. To save them from utter ruin, God is pleased graciously to interpose. *Therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; when they had no power nor resolution to help themselves, he magnified his strength in their weakness, and by himself, and for his own glory, arose to save them; which may be applied to the deliverance of the Jews from Babylon, but, according to the following verses, more eminently refers to the great salvation of Jesus, who by his own arm has vanquished his spiritual enemies—the enemies of all who are willing to be saved by his grace; and his righteous-*

2 For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.

3 And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

4 Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come

*ness, it sustained him, his own divine righteousness was his support, and enabled him effectually to accomplish the redemption of mankind; or his faithfulness to his promises, notwithstanding their provocations, engaged him to step forth to their rescue; for he put on righteousness as a breast-plate; being in his own person perfectly pure and holy, all the fiery darts of the enemy were repelled, and when the prince of the world came to tempt him he found him invulnerable; or by his righteous procedure, in delivering his faithful people, and destroying their enemies, he eminently secured his honour and faithfulness; and an helmet of salvation upon his head, clad in that divine panoply, which renders him terrible to his foes, and most adorable and amiable in the eyes of his friends: and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak; zeal for his own glory, and his faithful people's cause; vengeance against his enemies and theirs, which now to the uttermost he resolves to execute. According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies, to the islands he will repay recompence, a just retaliation for the wrongs they have committed against his people, and which will extend to all, even the most distant nations, that have any way oppressed or persecuted them. Note; (1.) Let not wicked men think to trample on the people of God with impunity; their day is coming, big with wrath and fury, the day of vengeance of our God. (2.) Let not the persecuted faints of God faint under their trials; their Lord is at hand, and he will assuredly save his faithful people to the uttermost.*

3. The glory of God in this salvation shall be spread far and wide. *So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun: from the east to west the knowledge of the Redeemer's work shall be spread, and God be magnified for his grace, who hath most graciously visited his people, and will continue to protect and preserve them who trust in him. When the enemy shall come like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him; which some interpret of a flood of heresy and persecution, that under the reign of antichrist shall break in upon the nations: others of the irruptions of the Turks and Tartars in the east, and the Goths and Vandals in the west; and it may more generally be applied to the floods of ungodliness which the great enemy of mankind in every place is seeking to raise, in order to overwhelm the cause of God and truth: but in vain, for the Lord will, in his appointed time, break the Mahomedan and Popish yoke; and by his Spirit, wherever the Gospel is preached, doth continually glorify his grace in the salvation of sinners from the power of Satan and the dominion of sin.*

4. This



to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at *thy* side.

5 Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged;

because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.

6 The multitude of camels shall cover thee,

4. This salvation will most eminently be manifested in that day of the Redeemer's appearing, when he shall take to him his great power and reign: and hereunto the apostle applies the words, Rom. xi. 25, 26. *And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord*, when having gathered in the fulness of the Gentiles, his ancient people the Jews shall at last be converted to him, and turning from their long course of transgression, and their inveterate rejection of the Messiah, they shall receive him, and enter into the common fold of the church, where all distinction between Jew and Gentile will cease. *As for me, this is my covenant with them*, there are Gospel blessings still in store for them; *my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words, which I have put in thy mouth*, the Redeemer having received his message from his Father, and the Spirit without measure for the discharge of his office as Mediator, and in order to furnish his ministers and people out of his fulness unto the end of time, *shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever*. God will have always a church, and maintain the ministry of his Gospel in the world, and by his Spirit will constantly make it effectual to the conversion of men's souls, even to all who will believe: and especially in the last days a more abundant out-pouring of this word and Spirit will be seen, and the knowledge of the Lord cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea. *Note*; (1.) It is by the ministry of the word that the church is maintained and preserved. (2.) The word is made effectual by the Spirit, who accompanies it to the heart; and Christ hath promised, in the power of his grace, to be with his ministers always, even to the end of the world.

CHAP. LX.

THE state of the church is here exhibited in a perfection which approaches nearest to the divine, the most beautiful and glorious imaginable; though we are yet to seek where or when the true exemplar of it may or shall be found. The prophetic company here addresses a certain society, under the figure of the city of Jerusalem, the true and spiritual Sion, ver. 14. which is supposed to sit sorrowful, and exhorts her to arouse and shew herself in all her beauty, now that her salvation, so long wished and hoped for, is at hand, and the *divine glory is about to rise upon her*, and illuminate the nations and people who had hitherto sat in thick darkness. The section may be divided into two parts: in the first part we have the general proposition, concerning this glorious and desirable state of the church, which is simply exhibited, ver. 1. and confirmed, ver. 2, 3. In the second, we have the declaration of that proposition; wherein the privileges of this state of the church are particularly enumerated and celebrated: *first*, the amplification of this city, from the nations hastening to it on all sides, bringing great abundance of every thing which they esteemed most dear and

precious. This is described simply and universally, ver. 4—7. particularly with respect to a certain nation, ver. 8, 9.—From the kings themselves, who should join themselves to it, and serve it with all their power, destruction being denounced upon those who should do otherwise, ver. 10—12.—From all the more solid and durable eminence which is in the world being transferred to the church, ver. 13.—From the enemies, which had heretofore afflicted it, becoming subject to it, and their kings nourishing and cherishing it, ver. 14—16. *Secondly*, the remarkable ornaments of the church, from a wonderful change of all things for the better, from the sanctity and peaceableness of its ministers and rulers, are described, ver. 17. *Thirdly*, its security from the evils and afflictions which it had sustained, ver. 18. *Fourthly*, the great brightness of the divine glory illuminating it, and the perpetuity of that blessing, ver. 19, 20. *Fifthly*, the integrity and wonderful increase of its citizens, ver. 21, 22. A short clause is added concerning the certainty of the completion of this prophecy, which, says Vitringa, is certainly too august to be applied to any state of the church which has yet been seen in the world. We have the best interpretation of it in the *Revelation* of St. John, ch. xx. where we are taught that this illustrious state of the Christian church shall not exist till after the destruction of the beast and Babylon; and, indeed, the whole series of this third discourse of the last part of Isaiah's prophecy, which sets forth the state of the church through a course of ages, proves that this conclusion must pertain to some *perfect* state of the church which should follow after it had weathered the afflictions and difficulties above predicted.

*Ver. 1. Arise, shine*] "Arise from your state of darkness and mourning, and enter into a state of light and happiness; that thou mayest be able to enlighten others: shew thy native beauty; suffer thyself to be so strongly illuminated by the glory of the Lord, that thou mayest be a light to others." For this is what is soon after added; *and the Gentiles shall walk in thy light*. See 1 Pet. iv. 4. Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, is the author and procurer of all light, happiness, and salvation to his church.

*Ver. 2, 3. For, behold, &c.*] The design of the Holy Spirit in this clause seems to be, to describe the state of the nations of the world at the time when God should illuminate the church with this light, as a new advent of his Son, and a repeated manifestation of his divine kingdom. Many have thought from this passage, that almost all the world should be found in a similar state of darkness, wherein the Son of God found it at his first coming: but I hope not. I trust that *vital* godliness will increase, however formalism and antinomianism be overthrown and swept off the face of the earth, till the Messiah comes to reign with his ancients during the great millennium.

*Ver. 5—7. Then thou shalt see, &c.*] *Then shalt thou fear, and overflow with joy; and thy heart shall be ruffled, and dilated;*

the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the LORD.

7 All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory.

8 Who *are* these *that* fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?

9 Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee.

10 And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee.

11 Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that *men* may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and *that* their kings *may be* brought.

12 For the nation and kingdom that will

not serve thee shall perish; yea, *those* nations shall be utterly wasted.

13 The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious.

14 The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

15 ¶ Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through *thee*, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.

16 Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings: and thou shalt know that I the LORD *am* thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.

17 For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness.

*dilated*, &c. Lowth. The prophet here shews first, that the nations who were to be added to the church should not come empty-handed, but prepared to give not only themselves but all their possessions to the church of God; and he teaches that the inhabitants of the *isles*, and the *seas*, should be the first to do this, ver. 5. then the orientals, who inhabit and wander over the extensive countries of Asia and Arabia; ver. 6, 7. and the prophet's discourse is so formed, that every one must immediately perceive that it is spiritually to be understood. Then the prophet signifies that this wonderful increase of the church shall excite in the minds of the pious the different affections both of fear and joy, as is common in unusual cases. The sudden transports of their joy should produce astonishment, like that which arises from the impressions of fear. *Kedar* and *Nebaioth* were two sons of Ishmael, who dwelt or were fixed in Arabia. By the *gold* and *incense*, and other riches here spoken of, are meant spiritual riches; the eminent and best gifts of divine grace. See Rev. iii. 18. and Coloss. iii. 16.

Ver. 8, 9. *Who are these that fly?* &c.] Vitringa understands by this new crowd of believers hastening to the church, the Greeks and Asiatics, and those of the west, growing under the Ottoman empire, who, having long sat in a state of ignorance and superstition, at this period shall be freed from their yoke, and hasten to the enlightened church in multitudes *like a cloud*, and with zeal

and impetuosity, like *doves* to their cotes or holes, when once made acquainted with the wonderful change of things and the mighty works wrought by God for the deliverance of his people. The flight of doves, especially when they return to their cotes, is remarkably swift and precipitate, as Bochart has observed. Hieroz. pars ii. lib. i. c. 2. See also Hosea, xi. 11. and Vitringa. Instead of *unto the name*, and *to the Holy One*, &c. ver. 9. Bishop Lowth reads, *because of the name of JEHOVAH thy God, and of the Holy One of Israel*, &c.

Ver. 10—12. *And the sons of strangers*, &c.] The discourse here rises, and will continue to rise, till the end of the section, that the blindest may discern spiritual things involved in these corporeal figures and emblems. It is not sufficient that the *nations* only, with their wealth and possessions, shall be added to the church, and perform all requisite offices towards it; but *kings* and *princes* also shall come: nor shall they come alone; a great *retinue* shall attend them; nor shall instances of their approach be few and rare, but common and frequent; *inasmuch* that the *gates of the city* shall be *always left open to receive* this continual accession of kings and people; nor shall there be any danger from those gates being thus perpetually open, since every enemy to the city shall be utterly destroyed, ver. 12. Vitringa reads the last words of ver. 11, *And kings with their retinue*.

Ver. 17. *Thy officers*] *Thine inspectors*. Lowth.

Ver.

18 Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.

19 The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.

20 Thy sun shall no more go down; nei-

ther shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.

21 Thy people also *shall be* all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.

22 A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the LORD will hasten it in his time.

*Ver. 19, 20. The sun, &c.]* Every body must perceive that this sublime passage is to be understood metaphorically; and the meaning is, that at the period here spoken of, the church shall be illuminated much more brightly by the divine Glory and Majesty, than the sun and moon illuminate and adorn with their lustre the whole theatre of nature. Vitringa, however, gives a more copious exposition of the text. "It shall come to pass (says he), that the felicity and prosperity of the church, at this period, shall not depend upon those external causes, which procure to earthly states and kingdoms peace, tranquillity, and an abundance of temporal good things; for God shall cause his church to know that he is peculiarly present with it, by his immediate providence and glory," ch. xlix. 10. There shall be also at this time such an abundance and efficacy of divine instruction, and such an exuberance of knowledge in divine things, that the church shall be satisfied with the teaching of God, and the particular care and discipline of Jesus Christ: that if the church, under the œconomy of the external and typical covenant, saw a temporary light, and underwent various changes of its state; at this time it shall rejoice for a long period with a perpetual and unchanged light, in a much more constant and happy state. See ch. xxx. 26. Jesus Christ is the eternal sun and light of his church, illuminating and sanctifying it by his Spirit, filling it with his glory, and prospering its whole state by his providence, for the end of eternal joy; so the Spirit, speaking of the heavenly Jerusalem, says, *For the glory of the Lord doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof*; that Lamb, who is the true God: for thus he explains himself, ch. xxii. 5. *There shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the LORD GOD giveth them light.*

*Ver. 21, 22. Thy people also shall be all righteous]* It was proper that the prophetic discourse, big with such excellent promises, should set forth the quality of the citizens of this blessed and fortunate city; for so many and excellent privileges cannot belong to any but the most faithful through divine grace. The prophet, therefore, teaches that the inhabitants of this city should be all *righteous* or *just*; where there can be no doubt that the righteousness of faith is meant; of living faith purifying the soul, sanctifying the affections, abounding in charity, and never separated from true holiness: so that they who are called *righteous* here, are the same who are elsewhere called *holy*. The following passages of our prophet are parallel to this; chap. iv. 3. xxxiii. 24. xxxv. 8. lii. 1. See also Zech. xiv.

20, 21. The last clause of ver. 22. should be rendered, *I the Lord will hasten it in its due or proper time.* The meaning is, "that God would effect all these remarkable promises without delay, without impediment, by his own mighty power, contrary to all expectation, and would wisely provide all proper means for that end; like the child inclosed in the womb, at the destined time these great events should—*burst forth.*" See ch. lxi. 7. Vitringa closes his comment on this part of the prophesy with some excellent remarks, tending to prove the reference of this chapter particularly to some future and glorious state of the church after the conversion of the Jews to the Christian faith, and the coming in of the fulness of the Gentiles; and he concludes thus, "However, all our care and endeavours should be, to behave ourselves worthy of so high a hope; and we should so form our lives and our manners, as rather to regard things present than future; neglecting no duty of a true citizen of the heavenly and spiritual Jerusalem, whereof we now profess ourselves members; that the expectation of the future may not deprive us of those blessings and privileges which God offers at present to all those who seriously and sincerely seek for his grace: in the mean time humbly and earnestly interceding with God, that his kingdom may come. Amen! *Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*"

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The glory and increase of the church of Christ are here beautifully represented.

i. Great light and glory are bestowed on her: *Arise, shine, for thy light is come*, the light of the Gospel illuminating a benighted world, wakening up sinners from the sleep of spiritual death, and turning their misery into joy and gladness; for, *the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee*, Christ, the sun of righteousness, with healing in his wings, manifesting, in the most transcendent manner, the glory of God, in the pardon and salvation of the faithful. *For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people*; either when this light should break forth, it would be the more welcome and surprising, because of the darkness, ignorance, idolatry, and superstition, which every where prevailed; or it speaks the distinguishing privilege of those to whom the Gospel was preached, who, like Israel in Goshen, had light in their dwellings, while the rest of the world, to whom it has not come, or who have rejected it, are, like the land of Egypt, covered with darkness which may be felt, living under a most dark dispensation; *but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.*

## C H A P. LXI.

*The office of Christ. The zeal and blessings of the faithful.*

[Before Christ 698.]

**T**HE Spirit of the Lord God *is* upon me; because the LORD hath anointed

me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are bound*;

2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the

*thee*, as it rested on the tabernacle in the pillar of a cloud and fire, not only protecting his church safely, but making her appear beautiful and glorious, the joy of the whole earth. *Note*; (1.) Without the light of the Gospel, the highest attainments of human wisdom are but folly and darkness. (2.) They who have seen Christ arising upon their souls in his glory, are bound to shine to his praise, and let their light appear before men, that they may take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus.

2. A great increase of the church is promised. Allured by the Gospel word, and struck with the bright examples of believers, the Gentiles shall become converts, and bow down before Christ the Sun of Righteousness. On every side, behold, they flock together, as children to their parents, to be nursed with the sincere milk of the word. With pleasing surprise the church will behold this strange accession, and, in a transport of joy, receive the multitude of mariners, and armies of Gentile soldiers, that among others should be converted unto the truth. From Midian and Ephah they shall come in vast companies, riding on camels and dromedaries. From Sheba they shall bring gold and incense, see Matt. ii. 11. and shew forth the praises of the Lord, for his mercy in calling them to himself. The inhabitants of Kedar and Nebaioth, in Arabia, whose riches chiefly consisted in their flocks, shall offer up themselves and their substance to God, and through Christ their spiritual sacrifices shall be accepted, and God glorified in their conversion. As a cloud before the wind, and as the doves flying to their windows, so thick, unanimous, openly and eagerly, shall the Gentiles hasten into the church of God, while, with wonder and delight, the saints welcome them to their rest. *Note*; (1.) When our souls, like the dove, are weary with wandering, or pursued by our spiritual enemies as birds of prey, we must fly to Christ for shelter, and under the shadow of his wings shall be safe, and find a pleasing resting-place. (2.) It is among the chief delights of a soul that loves the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, to behold his kingdom established, and many converted unto him.

2dly, The same subject is here pursued as in the foregoing verses.

1. The church shall gain vast accessions of strength and wealth. The distant isles shall wait for, and welcome the Saviour; the ships of Tarshish readily convey the sons of God to Zion, the spiritual church, with all their riches, willingly offering themselves, and all they have, to be employed in his blessed service, as the grateful return for the grace and glory that he hath provided for them. The sons of strangers, such as were the Gentile nations, shall now greatly contribute to build up the church, and kings minister in the blessed work; as when Constantine, and other Christian emperors and kings, espoused the cause of truth,

10

and as will be more eminently the case in the days to come. *For in my wrath I smote thee*; which may refer to the days of Pagan persecution, or to the prevailing power of antichrist, permitted for the coldness, formality, corruptions, and divisions, among God's professing people: *but in my favour have I had mercy on thee*; as when under the Christian emperors the church enjoyed rest; and as will be the case when Christ, having subdued the oppressors of his people, will set up his kingdom universally in the world; and great will be the glory of it. As the cedars of Lebanon, and every beautiful tree, contributed to the splendor of the temple: so shall all those who by the Gospel are called into the church, by the purity and holiness of their lives, adorn their profession, and bring glory to God. *Note*; (1.) When the heart is truly given up to God, we shall liberally employ our wealth and influence in support of his cause. (2.) The highest honour of kings is to be ministers of good to Christ's people.

2. Many of the enemies of the church shall become converts. Those who despised and afflicted the people of God shall be brought in deep humiliation to acknowledge their sin, and highly respect those whom they before insulted and abused. Thus the sufferings of the martyrs often confounded their persecutors; and many who have with bitter enmity opposed the Gospel, have been at last convinced by the word, and joined the people whom they had before reviled. And this will be more especially the case in the expected day of power and grace, when many Papists, Pagans, and Mahometans, will be turned from darkness unto light, and make open profession of the Gospel.

3. The gates of the church are open night and day continually; all are welcome to enter, and multitudes are daily coming in of all ranks and degrees: and this denotes the security in which they dwell, for none shall be suffered at this time to disturb their repose. *Note*; The gate of mercy in Christ is ever open, and sinners of every rank and degree are sure of admission into the city of God, whenever in faith and prayer they return to him.

4. Those who obstinately refuse the proffers of grace, and persist in their impenitence, must rue it. They will perish, and be utterly wasted, be they never so many, never so mighty. *Note*; They who bow not before the calls of grace, must be broken under the iron rod of vengeance. 2 Thess. i. 8.

3dly, What honour and respect should be paid to the church by those who were once enemies and persecutors, has been intimated above; and now we see what just reason there would appear for it.

1. Her excellence and beauty are gloriously established by the power and grace of the Saviour. *Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated*; to appearance, deserted of God, and the object of the world's enmity; *so that no man went through*

LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God ;  
to comfort all that mourn ;

3 To appoint unto them that mourn in  
Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the

oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise  
for the spirit of heaviness ; that they might be  
called trees of righteousness, the planting of  
the LORD, that he might be glorified.

*through thee* ; a place unfrequented, like the ruins of Jerusalem, whither none went to worship : *I will make thee an eternal excellency*, to be had in the highest esteem, adorned with all the graces of the Spirit, brighter than robes of wrought gold ; shining with gospel-light ; beautiful in discipline, and in the dignity, decency, simplicity, and order of her worship : *a joy of many generations* ; as long as time shall last, so long shall this church—this blessed work of God—be the joy of all its members on earth ; and to eternity its glory will extend, when in heaven the collected body of the faithful redeemed shall for ever shine with their exalted Head ; and this shall be done, that all the faints of God may acknowledge the power, grace, faithfulness, and love of the Lord their Saviour and Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob. *Note* ; Despicable as the church of Christ and her poor members may now appear, they will shortly be seen in a different point of view, when all those who despised and hated them will wonder and perish.

2. Her riches will be great. *Thou shalt suck the milk of the Gentiles, and the breast of kings* ; their richest treasures shall be offered to serve the interests of the church of Christ. The most precious metals shall be so plentiful that gold and silver will be as common as brass and iron, and iron and brass become as wood and stones ; which some refer to the excellence of the Gospel dispensation above the Mosaic ; and others, to the glory of the latter day, when in spiritual gifts and graces, and in purity of doctrine and discipline, the church will as much exceed its present state, as gold and silver do the baser metals.

3. The governors, whether civil or ecclesiastical, shall be men of justice and uprightness. No oppression will be committed, no injustice patronized ; but the officers shall be men of peace, who seek to heal all differences, and accommodate every dispute ; and the exactors, the tax-gatherers, who used to fleece the people, shall be *righteousness*, approve themselves with the greatest honesty and integrity.

4. All wars and rumours of wars shall cease, and persecution be at an end ; and the most uninterrupted peace and prosperity will be established. Salvation, stronger than walls and bulwarks, shall keep the people of God safe from every enemy. All their gates, the places of concourse, shall be called praise, their assemblies continually resounding with songs of triumph for redeeming love ; a state of bliss and happiness to which the church has never yet arrived.

5. God will be the everlasting light and glory of his faithful followers. And here the prophet seems to rise from the happy days of the church on earth to the consummation of her bliss in heaven, where they shall need neither sun nor moon, but shall enjoy the infinitely brighter presence of God, *their everlasting light and glory*. No clouds shall ever interrupt the blissful vision ; no darkness of affliction, desertion, or temptation, for a moment intervene ; but blessedness, abiding and eternal as the source from whence it flows, be the portion of these glorified faints.

*Thy sun shall no more go down*, but shine with unclouded splendor through the ages of eternity ; *neither shall thy moon withdraw itself* ; never will there be the least diminution of their bliss ; *for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light* ; when this bright sun plucked from his sphere shall be extinguished, and this pale moon in darkness hide her head, with infinitely transcending brightness shall the eternal God shine on his faints, and everlasting as his being shall be their joy and glory. *And the days of thy mourning shall be ended* ; a period put to all their sorrows, every tear wiped from their eye, and the cause of all, sin and suffering, be for ever banished from the place. O Lord, thy kingdom come !

6. They shall be perfected in holiness. *Thy people also shall be all righteous*, sanctified wholly by the Holy Spirit, in body, soul, and spirit, and made meet for the inheritance among the faints in light. *They shall inherit the land forever*, the heavenly Canaan ; *the branch of my planting*, ingrafted into Christ, and, after flourishing on earth, these faithful souls shall be transplanted with him to the paradise of God ; *the work of my hands*, the whole of salvation, from beginning to end, will in heaven be evidently seen and acknowledged to be God's own work, to the glory of his free and rich grace towards all that submit to his way of salvation ; *that I may be glorified*, as he will then be, in and by all his faints.

7. They shall be an innumerable multitude. *A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation* : few and feeble as the faints of God have been comparatively in every age and place hitherto, when collected they will appear numerous and formidable, a host like the host of God. *I the Lord will hasten it in his time* ; however difficult it may appear, or long as the final salvation of the faithful may seem to be delayed, the event is sure, and in God's appointed season it shall be accomplished. May we with faith and patience wait for it !

## CHAP. LXI.

THE fourth discourse, contained in this and the next chapter, according to Vitringa, explains more distinctly some parts of the foregoing prophecy in the last discourse. It is observable, that from this chapter to the end of the book, the same things and phrases which occur in the former discourse, are often repeated, and illustrated by new figures. This discourse is divided into two sections ; the former contained in this, the latter in the next chapter. In this section we have, I. A speech of the Messiah, supposed to be in the flesh, and present with his people, explaining to them the true cause of his unction and mission into the world ; namely, to preach the Gospel, and actually to confer upon them the good things therein promised ; ver. 1—3. II. A speech of the prophetic company ; explaining, *first*, the works of the followers of the Messiah in subjecting to him the inheritance of the Gentiles ; ver. 4. *Secondly*, the remarkable privileges every where

4 ¶ And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.

5 And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vine-dressers.

6 But ye shall be named the priests of the LORD: men shall call you the ministers of

our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.

7 For your shame ye shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them.

8 For I the LORD love judgment, I hate

where accompanying them; absolutely explained, ver. 5, 6. comparatively, with respect to the preceding state and time, ver. 7—9. III. A speech of the church, first, glorying in the Lord, and exciting herself to joy; with the reason thereof, ver. 10. Secondly, unfolding at large the reason of that exultation and joy, ver. 11.

Ver. 1—3. *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me*] *The Spirit of JEHOVAH is upon me, because JEHOVAH hath anointed me. To publish glad tidings to the meek hath he sent me; to bind up the broken-hearted: to proclaim to the captives freedom; and to the bounden, perfect liberty: to proclaim the year of acceptance with JEHOVAH; and the day of vengeance of our God: to comfort all those that mourn; to impart [gladness] to the mourners of Sion; to give them a beautiful crown instead of ashes; the oil of gladness instead of sorrow; the clothing of praise, instead of the spirit of heaviness: that they may be called trees approved; the plantation of JEHOVAH for his glory.* Lowth. These are the words of the Son of God, made man, wherein he sets forth the nature of his high and blessed office. From Luke iv. 18. there can be no doubt of the application of these words; nor of the meaning of them, from a review of the spiritual blessings offered to mankind by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The second verse alludes to the year of jubilee, which was proclaimed by the sound of the trumpet, when there was a general release from all manner of servitude, debts, and obligations; a lively and striking type of that liberty which Christ hath procured for all mankind. See Lev. xxv. 8, 9. *The day of vengeance*, which is here mentioned as accompanying the *acceptable year of the Lord*, alludes to that vengeance which was to be taken upon the enemies of the Gospel and Son of God. See Heb. x. 27—30. Matt. xxiv. 21. Rev. xviii. 1, &c. The prophet adds, as a consequence of the preaching, the gifts and graces dispensed by the Messiah, that the believers in him, and the partakers of his mercy, should be called *trees of righteousness*; that is to say, should become true and righteous believers, strong and firm in the faith; spiritual trees, planted and flourishing in the house of their God. See Psal. i. 3. xcii. 12. From this prophesy we gather, that the epithet of *Messiah, Christ, or Anointed*, which is given to the future Saviour in the writings of the Old Testament, and which afterwards became a part of his proper name, is to be referred to the economy of grace; and that Jesus Christ was anointed by the Father, not only to preach the blessings of the Gospel, and to promulgate the beginning of the new year of grace, but also to confer those blessings which should constitute this economy of the church, and distinguish it from the ancient one; which goods and gifts of grace,

being divine and celestial, demonstrate the sovereign and divine excellence of the person of the Messiah, though he is here represented principally as clothed with the human nature, and anointed in it for the great offices which he had undertaken. See Vitringa.

Ver. 4. *And they shall build the old wastes*] The meaning is, that the persons thus delivered by the Messiah, and anointed by his Spirit, should endeavour, and that with success, to bring to the knowledge and worship of the true God the Gentiles, for many ages alienated from him; and should apply themselves to the building up, confirming, and restoring them: the prophet representing the whole world in its spiritual aspect, under the appearance of a country wholly laid waste and desolate by an enemy; by which enemy we are here to understand the wicked one, the great enemy of man. The *strangers* and *aliens* in the next verse, which is wholly metaphorical, mean all those who were enemies to the church, and afterwards brought to its true service and obedience. See chap. lviii. 12. xlix. 8. liv. 3. Instead of *ploughmen* in the 5th verse, we may read *husbandmen*.

Ver. 7. *For your shame, &c.*] *Instead of your shame, ye shall receive a double inheritance; and of your ignominy, ye shall rejoice in their portion: for in their land a double share shall ye inherit; and everlasting gladness shall ye possess.* Lowth. See on the next verse.

Ver. 8. *For I the Lord love judgment, &c.*] *For I the Lord love justice: I hate stolen things in an offering; and I will give them their reward faithfully, and I will make with them, &c.* The reader is still to bear in mind, that the prophet, in speaking of these evangelical times and things, makes use of ideas and expressions taken from the old law. *Burnt-offering* is here used for the whole ritual worship of God. The phrase, *Stolen things for burnt-offering*, is not to be understood as if the Jews really offered things stolen in sacrifice; but that they were guilty of injustice, iniquity, rapine, and other vices, while they presented their sacrifices before the Lord. See Prov. xv. 8. The meaning of the verse is, "It is not to be wondered that God should be so benevolent and gracious as mentioned in the preceding verses, toward his people delivered and sanctified, who should bear his Gospel to the nations, and possess them. For, as the worship of God was celebrated by the greater part of his people so called, in much hypocrisy, amidst manifest breaches of his law, and on this account was hated by him, and therefore the worshippers of God attained not to the benefits which accompany the sincere service of religion; at this time having obtained a faithful people, worshipping him in spirit and in truth;—God

was

robbery for burnt-offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

9 And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they *are* the seed *which* the LORD hath blessed.

10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh *himself* with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth *herself* with her jewels.

11 For as the earth bringeth forth her bud,

“was both willing, and might, with strict justice, liberally confer his grace and indulgence upon these his faithful worshippers, and give them the hope of their fathers; and that by a covenant founded in the blood of his Son, which should remain to the end of ages, and whose effects should extend even to eternity.” See Vitringa.

Ver. 10, 11. *I will greatly rejoice, &c.*] The church here bursts forth into joy and rapture upon a view of the blessings of grace so liberally conferred upon her. In this sublime and elegant passage we have, *first*, a proposition, and then the reason of it in this verse, together with a confirmation of that reason in the next. *The garments of salvation, and the robe of righteousness, signify in this place all those effects of the spiritual redemption procured by Jesus Christ for his people, applied by divine grace to cover and adorn believers. There is nothing more common in the prophets, than to represent the graces and ornaments of a renewed mind or state under the similitude of a parable. Bishop Lowth reads the last clause, As the bridegroom decketh himself with a priestly crown; and as the bride adorneth herself with her costly jewels. See Mill. Dissert. IX. p. 259. In the 11th verse, the reason of the joy above mentioned is more fully explained. The salvation of Jehovah, and his righteousness made known throughout the world, should be the cause of joy; the only true, solid, and durable cause on earth. See chap. li. 3. lviii. 11.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Our Lord, in the opening of his ministry at Nazareth, Luke, iv. 17—21. has left us no doubt to whom this prophecy belongs. We have here,

1. His qualifications for, and ordination to, the office of Mediator. *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; without measure the Father hath given it unto him, that he might be enabled for the arduous work that he had undertaken: because the Lord hath anointed me; he invested him with full power and authority for the discharge of his offices, as prophet, priest, and king.*

2. In consequence of this appointment he opens his commission, which was, *to preach good tidings unto the meek; those who are lowly in their own eyes, to whom free pardon and grace will be welcome news: or the poor, as Luke, xi. 18. both in spirit and property, for unto these the Gospel is preached. He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted; those whose bleeding hearts, pierced with a sense of guilt and sin, no other physician can cure, he is sent to bind up, to comfort, and heal them: to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. Captives are we all by nature to sin and Satan; not even born free, and by willing subjection also under heavier bondage, from which, by reason of our native cor-*

ruption, we are utterly unable to deliver ourselves. He is come to *purchase* our liberty respecting God, by paying a ransom for us in satisfaction to the divine justice, which had delivered us up to the executioner of wrath: to *rescue* us by his power from the hands of our enemy; *destroying death, and him that had the power of it, and providing a sufficiency of grace and strength to loose our captive bands, and enable us to come forth at his call, delivered alike from the guilt and power of our sins. To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord; as the jubilee trumpet proclaimed the release of servants, the restoration of lost inheritances, and rest from all labour; so does the Gospel proclaim, with more acceptable sound, a glorious liberty among the sons of God; a restoration to our forfeited inheritance, through the blood and infinite merit of a Redeemer; and an eternal rest in glory, secured to the faithful soul, not for a year, but for the ages of eternity: and the day of vengeance of our God; the day of vengeance taken on Christ for our sins, or rather on the powers of darkness, when he triumphed over them on his cross; and which the sinner, who obstinately rejects his salvation, may expect, when he cometh on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory: to comfort all that mourn under a sense of guilt, or corruption, or affliction, or who compassionately melt at others' woes or danger; and this he does by his great and precious promises, which afford balm for every grief: to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, or the mourners of Zion, whose hearts are tenderly affected with her corruptions, divisions, declensions, and sufferings: to give unto them beauty for ashes. In the original there is an elegant paranomasia, פֶּהֶר for אֶפֶר *Epher*; they who lay in ashes, and were disfigured with dust, shall be raised up in beauty: the oil of joy for mourning; for in seasons of affliction they neglected to anoint themselves as at other times: the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; their sackcloth changed for brighter robes: expressions which are designed to describe the blessed change that is wrought upon the sinner's heart by the Gospel of Jesus, when from the dust of death and hell, from the depths of despair and misery, he is rescued, refreshed with the oil of divine grace, and his natural deformity removed, through that new creation in Christ Jesus, whereby he puts on the image of God in righteousness and true holiness, and rejoices in God his Saviour with that holy cheerfulness which adorns his profession: that they might be called trees of righteousness, whose blessed fruit proves the soundness of their root; the planting of the Lord, to whose rich grace they are indebted for all; that he might be glorified, this being his great design; and to shew forth his glory in our lips and our lives, must be our chief labour.*

and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth ; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

2dly, The promises here made might be designed for the encouragement of the Jews on their return from Babylon ; but they extend to the church of Christ, and every sinner delivered from the bonds of corruption.

1. They shall be enabled to rebuild their waste places, and repair their former desolations ; and when deeper desolations were spread over the world by sin, ignorance, and idolatry, God was pleased to send his Son, and by his ministry, and those whom he hath ordained, to raise up a glorious church in the midst of a desert world : and in every soul recovered by divine grace, the ruins of corruption are also repaired, and the heart renewed as a holy temple, a habitation for God through the Spirit.

2. They should no longer be in subjection to others, but have plenty of servants at their command : or this may better refer to those of the Gentile converts who, being put in trust with the Gospel, become pastors to the flock of Christ, and husbandmen in his field, labouring assiduously in the work of the ministry, to sow the seed of eternal life in men's hearts.

3. They shall be exalted and enriched ; honoured as priests of God, and enriched by the treasures of the Gentiles, the kings of Persia liberally assisting them at their return. But this belongs more particularly to the church of Christ, where every member is consecrated a priest unto God, into which the riches of the Gentiles are brought, who at first contributed abundantly to the relief of the poor saints at Jerusalem, and whose wealth is still in part devoted to the service of Christ and his people : and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves ; in Christ, the glory of all believers. Or it means, that the Jewish believers would rejoice to see the honour put upon the Gentiles, in making them fellow-heirs ; and of the same body. *Note ;* (1.) Despicably as the men of the world account of God's ministers, their honour in his sight is great. (2.) They employ riches aright, who use them to promote the interests of Christ, and to serve his church and people.

4. They shall have abundant cause of joy and rejoicing. *For your shame ye shall have double, or for your double shame ;* for that load of ignominy which the profession of the Gospel at first exposed them to, God would doubly repay them in inward consolations ; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion ; God can make them take pleasure in reproaches, and his love will be a portion that will abundantly satisfy them, in spite of all tribulations which they may be called to endure. *Therefore in their land they shall possess the double ;* whatever loss they sustain for Christ, he can give them in this world more in kind, or, what is better, double their inward comfort and joy, which is the best possession : *everlasting joy shall be unto them ;* faithful souls shall not only here be satisfied with the fulness of his house, but inherit an eternity of glory as their exceeding great reward.

5. God will be their guide, to teach them his will, and how to please him. *I the Lord love judgment,* and therefore will right the wrongs of his people : or he urges it

as an argument for them to walk in uprightness before him, and in the paths of justice respecting each other. *I hate robbery for burnt-offering ;* as when by their own deeds and duties men pretend or endeavour to obtain justification and the remission of their sins, which is regarded as the highest robbery of the Redeemer's glory, through whose infinite merit alone we can be accepted : or it is a rebuke to those who, like the Pharisees, were strict in the observance of their ceremonial offerings, yet in temper were covetous, and offered in sacrifice the fruits of their oppression. From a heart enslaved by iniquity, no pleasing service can be rendered to God. *And I will direct their work in truth ;* his believing people shall be taught of him the true worship and way to please him : *and I will make an everlasting covenant with them,* in which he engages to be the God of his faithful people for ever and ever.

6. Their posterity shall be blessed. *Their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people ;* distinguished for their sound faith and unfeigned piety : *all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed,* blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. And this, with all the foregoing verses, some writers apply to the calling of the Jews in the latter day, when they shall possess an honourable place in the church of God.

3dly, We have the words of the church triumphing in God her Saviour.

1. For what he hath done for her. *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord ; my soul shall be joyful in my God ;* an interest in his love known and believed, cannot but fill the soul with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. When we can say he is *my God,* we may well rejoice in him *greatly ;* here we need fear no excess, while he is the glorious object of our delight. *For he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness ;* he has applied to my soul the merit of the Redeemer's blood ; and he has made me all glorious with the garments of salvation, the divine tempers and graces with which the Spirit of God arrays the souls of genuine Christians ; *as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments,* coming from his chamber completely dressed, or in *sacerdotal robes,* glorious as those which the high-priest wore ; *and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels,* glittering and splendid for the day of her espousals : and thus are believers presented to Christ, justified and pardoned through his infinite merit, and decked with the beauty of holiness. May my soul be thus arrayed !

2. For what he has promised to do for her. *For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth ;* so that from year to year, in regular succession, the earth brings forth her increase ; *so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.* To the end of time these privileges and blessings shall be the ornaments of every faithful soul, and the subject of their ceaseless praise.



## C H A P. LXII.

*The fervent desire of the prophet to confirm the church in God's promises. The office of the ministers (unto which they are incited) in preaching the Gospel, and preparing the people thereto.*

[Before Christ 698.]

**F**OR Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

2 And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.

## C H A P. LXII.

THE second section of this fourth discourse contains, I. A speech of the prophetic company, representing the governors of the church of the New Testament, who first set forth the duty of the church's continual intercession for a brighter revelation of the salvation and kingdom of God, ver. 1.; and secondly, explain more distinctly the attributes of that brighter revelation, such as the accession of the Gentiles and kings themselves to the church, ver. 2. A new name to be given to the church by God himself;—middle of ver. 2. The preservation of that church, as of a thing most precious and ornamental, ver. 3. Its defence against external enemies by avengers and patrons, to be raised up by God, ver. 4, 5. II. We have in the second part a speech of the chorus representing the church, acknowledging, first, the singular benefit of the divine care and providence, whereby pastors and watchmen were given to it, continually interceding for a more clear revelation of the salvation of God; ver. 6. Secondly, exciting them to persevere in this duty, till God should fulfil his promises to the church; latter end of ver. 6. and 7. In the third part, the prophetic chorus first confirms the hope of the church by the oath wherewith God had ratified his promises of grace, ver. 8, 9. Secondly, it teaches, by a figurative discourse, that all impediments being removed which might seem capable of obstructing this work of God, there should be a great conflux to the church, ver. 10.; and thirdly, it sets forth anew, and more fully explains, these promises of grace, ver. 11, 12.

Ver. 1. *For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace*] It is plain from the last verse of the preceding chapter, that this is immediately connected with it; which Vitranga refers to a prophetic choir, representing the whole body of the ministers of God, and among these particularly the apostles and evangelists, at the beginning of the Gospel. These faithful ministers of God, therefore, the apostles and their successors, say, that they will not be silent, till the righteousness of the church, that is to say, its redemption, shall go forth as brightness, and its salvation shall burn as a shining lamp or torch; that is, till the kingdom of God shall be most brightly and completely revealed, and that saying of the psalmist be fulfilled, *The heavens declare*

3 Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.

4 Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.

5 For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.

6 ¶ I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their

*his righteousness, and all people behold his glory. See Vitranga.*

Ver. 2. *Thou shalt be called by a new name*] This is fully explained by the fourth verse, and chap. lxx. 15. A change of condition for the better is signified, to be expressed by some certain characteristic sign. Any thing in the style of Scripture is said to be called by a new name, whether it be adorned with new privileges or dignities, or on any account changes its condition from worse to better.

Ver. 3. *Thou shalt also be a crown of glory*] The meaning of this metaphorical expression is, that God would hold fast in his hand, and in the very palm of it, his church, as a thing extremely dear and precious to him. The last clause should be rendered, *And a royal diadem in the palm of thy God.*

Ver. 4. *Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken*] The prophet had said in the second verse, that the church should be called by a new name, which name is here expressed: that is to say, a new attribute should be discovered in the church, which had hitherto not been seen in her; namely, that she should receive a husband who had till now sat as a widow. חֶפְצִי-בָה *Chephzi-bah*, would better be rendered, *my delight is in her*, בְּעוּלָה and *Beulah, married.* See Ephes. v. 25.

Ver. 5. *For as a young man marrieth a virgin*] Bishop Lowth justly observes, that in the passage before us, instead of *sons* we should read *builder* or *creator*; for the word is not in the plural of בֵּן *ben*, a son, but of the participle *benoni*, from the verb בָּנָה *banah*; and is parallel and synonymous to אֱלֹהֵיךָ *elohaiik*, thy God, in the alternate member of this sentence. Compare chap. liv. 5. This reading will clear the prophet from the idea of representing Jerusalem as guilty of incest, in marrying her sons, and at the same time will add not only grace, but likewise force to the whole verse. See chap. xlix. 17. The verse so rendered will run thus:

For, as a young man marrieth a virgin,  
So shall thy Creator marry thee:  
And as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride,  
So shall thy God rejoice over thee.

Ver. 6, 7. *I have set watchmen, &c.*] As much as to say, "Since God, by the peculiar blessing of his providence, hath placed watchmen upon the walls of Jerusalem,

peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence,

7 And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

8 ¶ The LORD hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength, Surely I will no more give thy corn *to be* meat for thine enemies; and the sons of the stranger shall not drink thy wine, for the which thou hast laboured:

9 But they that have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the LORD; and they that have

brought it together shall drink it in the courts of my holiness.

10 ¶ Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people.

11 Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward *is* with him, and his work before him.

12 And they shall call them, The holy

“who shall constantly watch for its safety; therefore do you, who are intrusted with this office, perform your parts diligently, and intercede continually with him, that he would graciously fulfil the magnificent promises which he hath made to his church.” The word שׁמְרִים *shomrim*, rendered *watchmen*, signifies properly those *priests* and Levites who kept watch day and night about the temple, and is from them applied to the spiritual *watchmen* and ministers of the Christian church. See Vitringa.

Ver. 8, 9. *The Lord hath sworn*] The prophetic chorus here returns to its office, and, renewing its discourse, assures the church, now for a long time exposed to the persecution of her enemies, that God would most certainly procure for her times of public peace and tranquillity, in which, delivered from her enemies, and having the command of all her rights and possessions, she would rejoice in the *good things* granted to her by God, without any fear of enemies, amidst grateful thanks and praises to her God. The passage is metaphorical, and is to be understood of the free and undisturbed enjoyment of the spiritual blessings of religion. See Joel, ii. 24. iii. 18. Jer. xxxi. 12. Zech. ix. 17.

Ver. 10. *Go through, &c.*] The chorus, having promised in the preceding verses great things to the church, here removes an objection which might arise to the completion of that promise, and teaches, that although there might seem, from the state of the world, many and great impediments to this hope, yet that God would take care by his providence to have them removed; at the same time exhorting the people of the church, that, as was their duty, they should diligently apply themselves to promote the execution of this gracious design; that, all offences and impediments being removed, a free access should be granted to the Gentiles flowing into the bosom of the church. The expressions are metaphorical, taken from the preparations for a solemn entrance into a city. See chap. xxvi. 2. lvii. 14. xlix. 22. and Psal. cxviii. 19. Vitringa supposes that this passage refers to some great and future reformation in the church.

Ver. 11, 12. *Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed*] The scheme of this passage is so formed, that to the people of God, dispersed through all nations in a time of public affliction and persecution, the *voice of the Lord may sound, even to the ends of the earth*; publicly notifying that the Saviour is come to avenge his people, and to give them an

ample reward for the affliction they had sustained; and that these dispersed, now collected together, and returning to Zion, should be called *an holy people, the redeemed of the Lord*; and that Zion herself, that is to say, the pious, who in the time of affliction and persecution had patiently expected the event, should be called, *Sought out, A city not forsaken*. See chap. xl. 9, 10.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, With earnest zeal the prophet professes,

1. His determined purpose to labour ceaseless in the execution of his office. *For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest*: the concerns of God's church and people lay deeply imprinted on his heart, and therefore his sermons are frequent and urgent, and his prayers to God fervent in their behalf: *until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth*, till her cause should be clearly vindicated, and her enemies entirely destroyed; and so long will this prophesy endure; for Isaiah, though dead, yet speaketh. Note: (1.) The interests of Christ's kingdom are the great concern which lies upon a faithful minister's heart. (2.) In the service of immortal souls he is ready to spend and be spent. (3.) They who labour in faith, will assuredly see the fruit of their labours.

2. The prophet expresses his confidence that God would hear and answer him. *And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness*; the perfection of righteousness with which the church is privileged through Christ, or the justice of her cause: *and all kings thy glory*; shall behold and admire, and desire to partake of it; as when Constantine the Roman emperor, and others after his example, declared themselves Christians; and will be more universally the case in the day of the church's triumphs. *And thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name*; as a mark of that distinguished honour and dignity to which she shall be advanced by him who is the fountain of honour; who speaks, and it is done: see Rev. ii. 17. iii. 12. *Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord*; glorious in his righteousness and grace; valued by him as the richest crown which can adorn his brows; *and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God*; safe under his protection, as is every soul which simply and constantly depends upon him. Thus distinguished, *thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken, neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate*, as the

people, The redemed of the LORD: and not forsaken.  
thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city

the Gentile world seemed to be, before the preaching of the Gospel: *but thou shalt be called Elephzi-bab, a new and honourable title, signifying, My delight is in her; and thy land, Beulah, or married; for the Lord delighteth in thee, and in his love and favour all bliss and blessedness are comprehended: and thy land shall be married; the Lamb's wife, the church of the faithful, has not yet made herself ready, till the fulness of the Gentiles is come in; then the heavenly bridegroom shall bring her home to himself, to his eternal mansions in glory. For as a young man marrieth a virgin; fond of his bride, delighting in her company; and from the union a numerous offspring is expected; so shall thy sons marry thee; united to the church in warm affection, joining in her ordinances, delighting in the communion of the saints, and seeking to increase their number: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee: the church of the faithful are the joy of the Redeemer's soul; and his delight to all eternity will be in those who here upon earth believingly and perseveringly cleave to him.*

2dly, The gracious provision that God hath made for his people is here declared.

1. For their spiritual wants; giving them faithful ministers, and pouring out a spirit of prayer and supplication on them.

[1.] *I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night.* The church militant is as a city, defended by God as a wall of fire, yet incessantly besieged by the powers of sin, Satan, and the world. The ministers of the Gospel are the watchmen appointed to give warning of approaching danger; and their station demands, (1.) Fidelity and zeal for the cause of Christ and his people. (2.) Constancy and watchfulness, that in season and out of season they preach, rebuke, and exhort. (3.) Willingness to endure hardship, and not shrink from any danger or reproach to which they may be exposed. (4.) Incessant prayer, that they may be enabled to discharge their ministry, and be supported by that Almighty grace, without which mortal spirits must faint and fail.

[2.] The prayers of the people must second the preaching of the word. *Ye that make mention of the Lord, are his professing people; keep not silence, but be instant at a throne of grace; and give him no rest, for importunity will not offend him, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth, by the purity of her doctrine and discipline; by eminent holiness in the members; by their fervent love and charity one towards another; by vast accessions of converts; and, among these, the honourable of the earth.* Note; (1.) God's people delight to mention his name, and to speak to his praise of the things that he hath done for their souls. (2.) Prayer is the natural and constant language of the heart touched by pardoning grace. (3.) Nothing lies nearer the hearts of the pious than the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom. (4.) Persevering importunity in prayer is sure to find an answer of peace.

2. For their temporal wants. When their enemies prevailed, their country was ravaged, and their harvest and vintage served for a spoil; but now God, having for ever broken their arm, will feed his people with abundance of

good things: they shall eat their bread and drink their wine with a merry heart in the courts of his holiness, as the Priests and Levites there partook of the consecrated things, with holy sobriety and enlarged thankfulness. This may refer in part to the people of the Jews; but, though for a while they enjoyed their land, they soon were, and continue to be, dispossessed of it: therefore this must chiefly refer to the happy days of the church's prosperity, when God will give his people the abundance of outward blessings: or, (as corn and wine may also figurately signify the rich provisions of the Gospel,) a superabundant measure of all spiritual blessings, which the saints of God shall then possess. Note; (1.) Whatever labours we employ, even for the things of this life, it is God alone who giveth the increase. (2.) Temporal gifts are then truly blessings, when we receive them as coming from God's hand, and employ them for his glory. (3.) God, who gives us of this world's good, wills that we should richly enjoy it, and praise him for his bounty. (4.) God's wine is to be drunk in the courts of his holiness with temperance and sobriety; else our blessings, abused, will prove our greatest curse.

3dly, Though there may be an allusion, in the latter part of this chapter, to the return of the Jews from Babylon at Cyrus's proclamation, it seems, with the preceding part of the chapter, principally to belong to the Gospel-church.

1. Preparation is made for the return of captive souls. *Go through, go through the gates; the prison-doors are thrown open for their escape: prepare ye the way of the people, cast up, cast up the high-way, gather out the stones:* the ministers of God, as John the Baptist, must prepare the way, remove all obstacles, and make plain the road before their face; and especially *lift up a standard for the people;* display the banner of Christ in the Gospel, around which they must assemble, that in a body, under his guidance and protection, they may march in the highway of holiness, towards the heavenly mount of Zion.

2. The glorious appearance of Christ in his church is proclaimed, who comes as the captain of their salvation to lead the way. *Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, to all nations under heaven, among whom the Gospel shall be preached; say ye to the daughter of Zion, the members of the church, not only among the Jews, but the Gentiles also, Behold, thy salvation, or thy Saviour, cometh, with power and great glory, as when he first appeared in the flesh; or rather as he will appear hereafter, when his kingdom shall be established in all the world. Behold, his reward is with him;* either the glory which he himself should receive as the reward of his sufferings, or that which he hath to bestow on his faithful people: *and his work before him,* which he undertakes to accomplish for and in the faithful, even their complete salvation from Satan, sin, death, and hell.

3. His people will then become dignified with the most honourable titles. *They shall call them, The holy people;* for this is their distinguishing character and their honour, that they are consecrated to God, and pure in heart: *The redemed of the Lord,* this being their singular mercy, and the source of all their holiness and happiness, for both of which

## C H A P. LXIII.

*Christ sheweth who he is, what his victory over his enemies, and what his mercy toward his church. In his just wrath he remembereth his free mercy. The church, in their prayer and complaint, profess their faith.*

[Before Christ 698.]

**W**H O is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this *that is* glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.

2 Wherefore *art thou* red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?

3 I have trodden the winepress alone; and

of the people *there was* none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.

4 For the day of vengeance *is* in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.

5 And I looked, and *there was* none to help; and I wondered that *there was* none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me.

6 And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.

which they are indebted to the redemption of Jesus: *and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken.* Desolate as the church before appeared, now the greatest resort shall be made thither, and the glory of God shall be in the midst of her.

## C H A P. LXIII.

THE fifth and last discourse of the fifth part of Isaiah's prophecies is contained in this and the following chapters. The present period serves for the illustration of chap. lix. 16—18. where the Messiah is introduced as a hero, completely armed, to bring salvation to his friends, and to punish his enemies. Vitringa comprises the first section of this discourse in the first six verses of this chapter; where we have, *first*, the hypothesis, or argument of the prophesy; a scenical view of a certain illustrious person, hero, and avenger, fresh from the slaughter of his enemies, ver. 1, 2.; and *secondly*, an information of the person and state of this hero, by way of question and answer: the answer, unfolding the cause of the redness of his garment, namely, the vengeance which he had taken upon his enemies, is set forth, ver. 3. and explained more fully, ver. 4—6. We may just repeat an observation made before, that the prophecies in this latter part of the book are only explanatory of those in the great and important third discourse, from chap. li. to lx. See on chap. lxi.

*Ver. 1. Who is this, &c.] Or, Who is this that cometh from Edom, with purple garments from Bozrah? This, who is solemn, or venerable in his attire, marching on in the greatness of his strength? I that speak of deliverance, [doing right,] mighty to save. See chap. xxxiv. 5, 6. The Idumeans joined with the enemies of the Jews in bringing on the destruction of Jerusalem in the time of the captivity, for which they were severely reprov'd by the prophets, and threatened with utter destruction, which accordingly came to pass: the prophets, therefore, generally apply the names of these people to signify any inveterate and cruel enemy, as in this place; but the words *Edom* and *Bozrah* may be taken in the appellative sense, to denote in general a *field of blood*, or a *place of slaughter*: the word *Edom* signifying *red*, and *Bozrah*, a *vintage*, according to some; which, in*

the prophetic idiom, import God's vengeance upon the wicked. The Messiah is said to be *solemn* or *venerable in his attire*; that is to say, like a general marching at the head of his army, and carrying the token of victory on his raiment; or, according to others, clothed in such a manner as to command reverence and respect. The frequent transitions from one person to another, observed in the Hebrew poetry, is a strong indication of a mind hurried away by the impulse of inspiration; and sometimes, as in the present case, is as strong a mark of a dramatic form of composition. See Lowth's Prelections, and Vitringa.

*Ver. 3. I have trodden, &c.]* This is a common image among the prophets, generally made use of to describe the effects of the divine vengeance, but never touched upon by any classic author among the Greeks and Romans. Bishop Lowth has well observed, that there is an energy and sublimity in this description, which is not to be paralleled in any language. Though, indeed, the image of a warrior inebriated with wine may appear to modern critics a coarse comparison, when applied to the Messiah; yet it might not convey that idea to the antient Jews, who perhaps never joined that secondary idea to this vice, in the comparison which always occurs in the mind of the modern, owing to that power of the mind by which it associates different ideas. Vitringa renders this verse very properly, *I have trodden, &c. for I have trodden them in mine anger, and trampled them in my fury; and their blood or strength has been sprinkled or dashed upon my garments, and I have stained all my raiment.*

*Ver. 4—6. For the day of vengeance, &c.]* There is nothing requisite to the understanding of this passage but a reference to chap. lix. 16, 17. where nearly the same words are used to describe the same thing. These verses may be read in the past tense. Some critics think that the phrase, *make them drunk*, ver. 6. might have been rendered, *was made drunk with them*; that is to say, "I was made drunk with their blood." This expression is common to the Hebrew writers, but appears with greater elegance and propriety in this place, as those who tread in the wine-press are commonly inebriated by that means. See chap. xxiv. 20. Psal. lx. 3, &c. Vitringa, in his investigation

7 ¶ I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness towards the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses.

8 For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour.

9 In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them and carried them all the days of old.

10 But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them.

11 Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is he

gation of this prophecy, observes, *first*, that it is not to be interpreted of the death and passion of our Saviour, but of the deliverance of the church from certain enemies with great slaughter and effusion of their blood; and *secondly*, that under this figure is described the final and peremptory judgment whereby the Messiah, the deliverer and avenger of his people, will take the most severe vengeance upon the princes and people of idolatrous and apostate Rome. The visions in the Revelation, chap. xiv. 18. and xix. 12. says he, leave here no manner of doubt. Compare *lix.* 15, &c.

*Ver. 7.]* Vitringa begins here the *second* section of the fifth discourse, which is comprised, according to him, in this and the following chapter, and contains the discourse of a company of penitent Jews, confessional and supplicatory. In the *confessional* part we have, *first*, a commemoration of the benefits conferred by God upon the Jewish nation, in hope that they would rightly use them; general in *ver. 7, 8.* particular, with respect to the angel of Jehovah, and the *Holy Spirit*, *ver. 9, 10.* *Secondly*, we have the ingratitude of this nation, with the sad consequence thereof; namely, deprivation of their superior light and grace, *ver. 10.* *Thirdly*, a complaint of the people, long forsaken, concerning the misery of their state, compared with the benefits of ancient times; *ver. 11—14.* The *supplicatory* part contains, *first*, an humble supplication for this miserable and afflicted people; the arguments being drawn from the divine excellencies, *ver. 15.*—from confidence in God alone, with a renunciation of all merit; *ver. 16.*—and from the greatness of their misery and calamity, *ver. 17—19.* *Secondly*, a prayer is intermixed, expressing their ardent desire of this benefit; the first reason being drawn from the example of God's descent upon mount Sinai, chap. *lxiv.* 1—3. The second from the greater examples of divine grace which were expected under the new oecomy, *ver. 4.* We have, *thirdly*, the supplication repeated; wherein they justify the ways of God, and in the most humble manner again confess their own unworthiness and spiritual misery; *ver. 5—7.* They earnestly deprecate the wrath of God, which had lain so long upon them, from a regard to God and themselves, *ver. 8, 9.* They urge in mournful terms their external and temporal calamity, to move the compassion of God; *ver. 10—12.* Vitringa supposes that this section pertains to the present dispersed Jews, who, seeing the wonderful display of God's power in the destruction of the papal church and tyranny, will be converted in consequence to

the Christian religion: in a view to this he here introduces a company of Jews, representing the first-fruits at the beginning of this great work of grace, deploring the blindness and hardness of their nation, and with the utmost humility turning themselves, and praying for that complete conversion of their nation, which is to follow the *coming-in of the fulness of the Gentiles.* See *Rom. xi.* 25, 26.

*I will mention] I will commemorate, &c.* The prophet here speaks in the person of those penitent Jews, who, convinced themselves of the truth of Christianity, interceded for the rest of their brethren, in that state of blindness and darkness under which the nation had long groaned. An attention to the analysis will, perhaps, prove the best comment on this section.

*Ver. 9. And the Angel of his presence saved them]* The chorus, being about to repeat particularly the general benefits mentioned in the preceding verses, refers them to two principal ones, namely, the persevering and avenging *Angel*, and the consolatory and instructing *Holy Spirit.* They speak of the first directly, and of the latter obliquely, that they might not have occasion to repeat the same thing; for when they say, *ver. 10. and vexed, or grieved, his Holy Spirit,* they suppose that the nation, besides the singular blessing of the great and avenging *angel*, had also another of the first importance in the *Holy Spirit.* By the phrase, *In all their affliction he was afflicted,* is signified the extreme tenderness of God's love toward his people. See chap. *xlix.* 15. *The Angel of his presence* means that *Angel* who conducted them by the cloud and pillar of fire; namely, the Messiah, or second person of the ever-blessed Trinity, who is called the *Angel of the presence, or face of the Lord,* because he is the brightness of the glory of God. Compare *Exod. xxxiii.* 14. Jesus Christ is called, in the New Testament, *The image of God;* and the *glory of God* is said to *shine in the face of Jesus Christ.* See *2 Cor. iv.* 6. and Vitringa.

*Ver. 10. But they rebelled, &c.]* We have frequent mention, in the books of the Old Testament, of the *Holy Spirit;* and our prophet himself has repeatedly spoken of him. He is here denoted in his office of teaching and convincing the people, as appears from the sin committed against him. See *Neh. ix.* 20, 30. and compare *Numb. xi.* 25, 26.

*Ver. 11. Then he remembered, &c.]* Vitringa is of opinion, that these are the words of the people, not of God. *Then he,* that is, the *people,* thus afflicted, remembered, or called to mind, the past benefits which God had conferred upon

that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? where *is* he that put his holy Spirit within him?

12 That led *them* by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name?

13 That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, *that* they should not stumble?

14 As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the LORD caused him to rest: so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name.

15 ¶ Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where *is* thy zeal and thy strength, the

founding of thy bowels and of thy mercies towards me? are they restrained?

16 Doubtless thou *art* our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O LORD, *art* our father, our redeemer: thy name is from everlasting.

17 O LORD, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, *and* hardened our heart from thy fear? Return for thy servants' sake, the tribes of thine inheritance.

18 The people of thy holiness have possessed *it* but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary.

19 We are *thine*: thou never barest rule over them; they were not called by thy name.

upon them; saying, *Where is he who heretofore performed so many and great wonders for his people? Who bestoweth so great goodness to the house of Israel?* ver. 7. See Jer. ii. 6. *The shepherds of the flock* mean Moses and Aaron. Compare Psal. lxxvii. 20. *He that putteth his Holy Spirit within him*, that is to say, *within his people*, alludes to the history, Numb. xi. 17.

*Ver. 12. That led them, &c.] That made his glorious arm pass along at the right hand of Moses, &c. See Deut. xxxiii. 27. Exod. xiv. 16. Psal. xvi. 8.*

*Ver. 15. Look down from heaven]* In this excellent and pious prayer of the first-fruits of the converted Jews, they intreat God for his grace and mercy, to look down with an eye of compassion upon them. "Where is thy love and concern for thy people, they add, and the power thou usest to exert for their deliverance? Where are thy tender mercies which thou formerly shewedst towards them?" The arguments here are urged, and to be understood, *humano more* (after the manner of men). See Vitringa.

*Ver. 16. Doubtless thou art our Father]* "Our only hope is the relation we have to thee, who hast vouchsafed to call thyself our Father; for it is in vain to boast that we are the children of Abraham or Jacob. They know not our condition, nor can they afford us any relief." Vitringa thinks that the words contain still further a renunciation of all merit in themselves and their fathers, and an entire confidence in the alone grace of God for deliverance and salvation. Pelican paraphrases it, "We place no confidence in the merits of our fathers, whosoever or whatsoever they were: but in thee alone, O Lord, who art our Father; our Redeemer from everlasting is thy name." See chap. lxiv. 8.

*Ver. 17. O Lord, why hast thou made us to err?]* The chorus here humbly expostulate with God. The first clause may be rendered, *O Lord, why hast thou suffered us?* &c. See Deut. xxxii. 36.

*Ver. 18, 19, The people of thy holiness]* Or, *Thy holy people have possessed [the land] but for a little time, &c. Ver. 19.*

*We have been as they over whom thou never bearest rule, and upon whom thy name was not called.* There is no doubt but that the calamity of the external state of the Jewish people is here described. If we compare this description with the repetition of the same calamity, ver. 10, 11. of the next chapter, we can have no doubt that these words pertain to the state of the Jewish people, banished as they are, and have been for a long time, from the land which, in comparison of this tedious exile, they possessed but a little while; their sanctuary and holy city being possessed and trodden down by their bitterest enemies: so that they are in such a state as to seem like people who never were the chosen and peculiar people of God. See chap. xlii. 7. xliv. 5. compared with chap. iv. 1. There cannot be any thing more striking than the miserable state of this once-favoured people, now dispersed and distressed throughout all the kingdoms of the world.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The former chapter closed with the promise of the Saviour's appearing; this opens with the fulfilment of that promise, and the glorious victory obtained by the Redeemer over the powers of darkness, through his incarnation; or it points to the overthrow of all the enemies of his church in the last days.

1. The prophet, as suddenly surprised with the appearance of this glorious personage, with abrupt inquiry asks, *Who is this?* Is the form human or divine, *that I behold?* He cometh from Eden, the country of the professed enemies of the church, *with dyed garments from Buzrah*; like some victorious conqueror, who, having sacked the capital of his foes, returns in triumph, his sword yet reeking from the slaughter, and his garments dyed with the blood of the slain: *this that is glorious in his apparel*, bearing in his person, aspect, and dress, the marks of transcendent dignity: *travelling in the greatness of his strength*; not faint through fatigue, nor weary with his march; but with power irresistible, and zeal unquenchable, advancing with majestic statefulness to new conquests, till every foe becomes his footstool.

2. The

## CHAP. LXIV.

*The church prayeth for the illustration of God's power: celebrating God's mercy, it maketh confession of its natural corruptions: it complaineth of its affliction.*

[Before Christ 698.]

**O**H that thou wouldest rend the heavens,  
that thou wouldest come down, that

2. The great God-man approaches this devout inquirer; and, terrible as his aspect seemed, his lips are full of grace, and his answer unspeakably kind and gracious. *I that speak in righteousness*, whose word is truth itself, and his promises to be fully relied upon by every faithful soul: or of *righteousness*; that glorious plan of redemption, to accomplish which is the great design of my appearance, and to reveal it, the office of my Spirit; in virtue whereof I am *mighty to save*; to save to the uttermost from sin, corruption, death, and hell; and none so guilty, none so desperate, as to be beyond the power of my grace.

3. Encouraged by the condescensions he had experienced, the prophet humbly presumes to renew his inquiry. If thou art not come to destroy men's lives, but to save, *Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat?* These bloody ensigns seem to bespeak destruction, not salvation; and mark the arm of inexorable justice, rather than forbearing mercy. *Note*; Though doubts disturb, and fears dismay, the farther we inquire into the divine word, the more will they be removed and silenced.

4. The Saviour with fullest satisfaction resolves his question. *I have trodden the wine-press*, and underneath my feet sin, death, and hell, as vanquished foes, are fallen; and with the blood of these my adversaries is my raiment discoloured. This victory have I gained *alone*, too great to need an associate, and infinitely too jealous of mine own honour to accept assistance. *Of the people there was none with me*; none of the inhabitants of heaven or earth to afford the least succour, or take the least share in the glorious work. The salvation of sinners, their eternal redemption from wrath to glory, is my act alone: yours be the benefit, mine the honour. *For I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury*; my former victories ensure my future: what foes soever yet remain, in wrath unquenchable, and fury irresistible, will I tread into the dust; *and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment*: the powers of antichristian tyranny shall be broken, and my garments dipt in blood, Rev. xix. 13. *for the day of vengeance is in mine heart*; fixed and immutable is the decree, the day determined, when the blood of my martyrs and suffering saints shall be recompensed; *and the year of my redeemed is come*, when all my faithful ones shall be collected, and their triumphs begin. *And I looked, and there was none to help*; as at the first, when, sunk in helpless misery, the race of men lay weltering in their blood; so under the power of antichrist, prostrate in the dust, the Redeemer beholds his church in the latter day: *and I wondered that there was none to uphold the sinking cause, and the afflicted people*. None, none were found able or willing to espouse their quarrel, or

the mountains might flow down at thy presence,

2 As *when* the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy name known to thine adversaries, *that* the nations may tremble at thy presence!

3 When thou didst terrible things *which*

attempt their deliverance; *therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me*; that arm of omnipotence, which alone could accomplish it: *and my fury, it upheld me*; zeal for his people's safety and honour, indignation against their enemies, burned in his bosom, and urged him to take vengeance to the uttermost. *And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury*; putting into their hands the cup of the wine of the wrath of God, and making them drink the dregs thereof: *and I will bring down their strength to the earth*, giving them an utter overthrow, and covering them with everlasting desolations. *Note*; (1.) When all other help fails, Christ never fails those who trust him. (2.) Though our deliverance may seem long delayed and our enemies triumphant, the decree is gone forth against them, and he that cometh, will come, and will not tarry. (3.) They who persist in drinking of the intoxicating cup of sin, will shortly be made to drink the cup of trembling.

2dly, As an encouragement to hope for future mercies, the prophet takes a review of the past, so wonderfully and graciously vouchsafed unto them.

1. He makes a grateful acknowledgment in general of all the mercies and loving-kindnesses of God to his people, so numberless, so great, that they were more than he is able to express, and all the effects of his boundless grace and undeserved favour. *Note*; (1.) When we review God's mercies toward us with an enlightened mind, we shall be lost in wonder, love, and praise. (2.) Every blessing that we can enjoy of providence, grace, or glory, in time or eternity, flows not from the least merit in us, for we have none, but from God's infinitely rich and gratuitous mercy.

2. He mentions some especial instances of his kindness. *For he said, Surely they are my people*; he had proffered to them all his unsearchable riches, and justly expected that they would approve themselves to him in all fidelity and truth: *children that will not lie*; neither be false to their vows, nor hypocritical in his service: *so he was their Saviour*, from their house of bondage in Egypt particularly, and as he ever was and is, of every faithful soul, from every enemy, from every danger. *For all their affliction he was afflicted*; he felt with tender sympathy every burden under which they groaned, and came with kindest compassion and welcome relief to deliver them. Or it may read, *In all their affliction there was no affliction*; the sense of his love alleviated their sorrows, and made every burden light; *and the angel of his presence saved them*; the Lord Jesus Christ, the uncreated angel who was with Israel in the wilderness, and whose voice they were enjoined to obey, Exod. xxiii. 20, 21. *In his love and in his pity he redeemed them from their state of hard servitude; and he bare them in his arms, as a shepherd the weak lambs of his*

we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence.

4 ¶ For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the

**flock**; and carried them all the days of old; while he cut off the rebellious generation, he brought his obedient people safe to their promised rest in Canaan. And thus doth the Redeemer regard and care for and protect all those who simply, faithfully, and perseveringly rely upon him. *Note*; (1.) The children of God will not lie; for they who do so, prove their parentage to be of their father the devil. (2.) It is a comfort to God's afflicted people, that they have a compassionate high-priest, who can be touched with the feeling of their infirmities. (3.) They who look for their portion in a better world, sit easy under this world's troubles: they know that they are both light and momentary. (4.) If the angel of God's presence had not borne us up, many a time must we already have utterly fainted in our journey towards the heavenly Canaan.

3. Their repeated and long-continued ingratitude at last brought his rod upon them. *They rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit*; rejected God from being their king, cast off their allegiance; and, by their unbelief, murmuring, and idolatry, forsook his covenant, deaf to the warnings of Moses and the prophets; as the Scribes and Pharisees in our Lord's day, the true children of their fathers, always resisted the Holy Ghost; in consequence of which, *God*, that offended God whose favour they had so abused, *turned to be their enemy, and fought against them*, with repeated strokes of his indignation, both in the wilderness, and after their settlement in Canaan, till their captivity in Babylon; and as he did afterwards, till the Romans came and destroyed them. *Note*; Sin is the cause of all our misery: if God from our friend becomes our foe, surely this makes the quarrel.

4. They reflect upon the particular favours of God, when first he formed them into a people. Some understand these as the words of God, calling to mind his own mercies of old, as an argument still to do them good, and manifest his pity towards them. Others suppose these to be the reflections of the few faithful among them, still encouraging themselves from past experience to hope for his mercy. *Then he remembered the days of old, Moses and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea, with the shepherd, or shepherds of his flock, Moses, Aaron, and the elders of Israel? where is he that put his Holy Spirit within him?* in Moses, or the people of Israel, who were taught and instructed of God: and this they mention as mourning over the sad change, and complaining of the absence of God's Spirit; or as an humble expostulation and prayer for the return of his blessed influences: *that led them by the right hand of Moses, strengthening and prospering him as their captain, with his glorious arm, enabling their leader to perform miracles for their preservation; dividing the water before them, at the Red Sea, to make himself an everlasting name?* by their miraculous deliverance, and the destruction there brought upon their enemies: *that led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, or in the plain, that they should not stumble?* as easy their passage between the divided waters, as dry and safe, as when a horse travels on a level road: *As a beast goeth down into the valley, softly and gently,*

*so the Spirit of the Lord caused them to rest; either when they descended from the shore into the depths of the sea, they did it gently, and without precipitation, secure in the divine protection; or it refers to their several stations in the wilderness, where, under God's direction, they rested safe under his divine support. So didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name; his honour being concerned in protecting them; and this being the ultimate design of all his works and ways to manifest his own glory, and engage the everlasting praise of his faithful people. Note*; (1.) If God call us to pass through the depths of the sea, the forest trials, or the most imminent dangers, he can make the path plain, and enable us in confidence and peace to go safely through. (2.) If we ever find true rest to our souls, it must come from the Eternal Spirit; for this world faith, it is not in me. (3.) When God's glory is the great end we aim at in all our works and ways, then we truly correspond with the divine will.

3dly, We have the importunate prayer of God's people, which is continued through the following chapter. It was penned for their use in captivity, either in Babylon, or in their present dispersion, and is applicable to the church of God during its afflicted state, as well as to particular believers.

1. They desire a gracious hearing. *Look down from heaven*; not that his eyes ever cease to go to and fro in the earth, but they beg a look of tender pity and regard, and that God would bend his ear to the voice of their humble petitions; *and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory*; the place where he is pleased to fix his radiant throne, within the highest heavens, where the Most Holy dwells, and holy angels celebrate his praise. *Note*; When we consider what a holy God we approach, and what sinful dust and ashes we are, it becomes us ever to appear before him with deepest humility, reverence, and godly fear.

2. They lament their miserable case. *O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways? and hardened our heart from thy fear?* They had erred from God's ways and worship, and hardened themselves against his fear and his warnings, and God had now given them up to their own hard hearts in just judgment; and this was matter of deep complaint to those whose eyes were opened to see their people's state. They did not charge God with their sins, as the author of them, but lamented the sore visitations they had provoked by them; and no sufferings are more deplorable than those spiritual judgments. *Our adversaries also have trodden down thy sanctuary*: the ruin of their lands the losses of their own family, were to the pious, no doubt, heavy afflictions; but God's temple fallen, his service interrupted, this swallowed up every other grief.

3. They make their plea for mercy to the God of all mercy.

[1.] They urge his former dealings with them. *Where is thy zeal, thy jealousy for thy own glory, while the enemies of Zion blaspheme; thy fervent love towards thy people, which of old appeared; and thy strength?* Is thine arm shortened, that it cannot save? *the founding of thy bowels*  
and



ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, *what* he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.

5 Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, *those that* remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved.

*and of thy mercies, that used to melt over every distress of Israel, are they restrained? Hath the Lord forgotten to be gracious? will he be no more intreated? No; it cannot be: thou wilt surely turn and refresh us, and bring us from the depths of the earth again. For,*

[2.]  *Doubtless thou art our Father; provoking as our transgressions have been, we cannot quit the dear relation in which we once stood: and shall not the meltings of thy paternal heart still admit the claim, and receive the returning prodigals? Though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not; either they are gone, neither know our case, nor can assist us with their advice and prayers; or rather, though, were they again on earth, they might be led to disown such degenerate children; yet, greater are thy compassions, thou, O Lord, art our Father; faith cannot quit the plea, unworthy as we are to be called thy sons; our Redeemer, thy name is from everlasting, the same in mercy and goodness for ever.*

[3.] They plead the covenant established with their fathers and them. *Return for thy servants' sake; return in mercy, or turn from thy wrathful indignation, for the sake of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with whom the covenant was made; or for the sake of the few faithful which remained, the tribes of thine inheritance, by right thine, and in duty and gratitude bound to be thy servants; save us, that we may be such; nor suffer us longer to serve strangers, or strange gods, in a strange land.*

[4.] They urge the short enjoyment they had of the promised land and the sanctuary of God. *The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while: separated as they were from all others, and consecrated to God, they hoped to have possessed the land for ever; but short, comparatively, was their abode in Canaan, about 1400 years in all, and seldom in peace and quietness; while their temple had a much shorter duration, and stood little more than 400.*

[5.] They plead, *We are thine: they were so in profession, and promised to be such in practice, when the Lord should turn their captivity. Thou never barest rule over them, their conquerors and oppressors, to whom God had not stood in that dear relation, in which he had done to the Jews: they were not called by thy name; not regarded as his peculiar people, nor professed his blessed service: and surely God will not suffer these to trample down that people, who, though they have been unfaithful, yet bore his name, and desire to be re-admitted to his favour, and to yield themselves up to his service. Note: When we return unto God, we may be fully sure that he will return unto us.*

6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

7 And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.

## C H A P. LXIV.

*Ver. 1—3. Oh that thou wouldst rend, &c.] Wouldst rend, &c. ver. 2. as the fire kindleth the dry fuel; as the fire causeth the waters to boil, &c. Lowth. The ideas are here taken from the descent of God upon mount Sinai, and are very similar to Judges, v. 4. The connexion is this: "Oh that thou wouldst descend, that the mountains might flow at thy presence! thy indignation so raging, as a fire breaketh out of dried sticks, (so the original may be rendered,) and spreads the flames around, and as a more vehement fire makes the water to boil." It is subjoined, To make thy name known to thine adversaries, namely, "to consume in thy wrath;" which answers to the former member:—that the nations may be moved at thy presence, which answers to the latter member; that is to say, so moved, as the fire makes the water to boil. When thou didst terrible things, which we looked not for, namely, "when thou descendedst to deliver us from Egypt, and to form us into a people, the mountains flowed, &c." See Exod. xix. 18. Deut. xxxii. 22, &c. Pl. xviii. 7. &c. and Vitringa.*

*Ver. 4. For since the beginning, &c.] See 1 Cor. ii. 9. The meaning of the phrase, Neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, is, "no one can relate or explain, as no one hath seen, what is known only to God, in all his wonderful operations, whose mighty wisdom far transcends human thought and counsel." St. Paul has expressed this paraphrastically, Neither have entered into the heart of man the things, &c. Comp. ch. lv. 8, 9.*

*Ver. 5—7. Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, &c.] Thou meetest with joy those who work righteousness; who in thy ways remember thee. Lo! thou art angry; for we have sinned; because of our deeds; for we have been rebellious: and we are all of us as a polluted thing; and like a rejected garment are all our righteous deeds: and we are withered away, like a leaf, all of us; and our sins, like the wind, have borne us away. There is no one that invoceth thy name, that rouseth himself up to lay hold on thee: therefore thou hast bidden thy face from us; and hast delivered us up into the hand of our iniquities. Lowth. The supplication interrupted by the earnest vow in the preceding verse is here repeated. The supplicants acknowledge their common apostacy from God, and general corruption; in the mean time praising and celebrating the conduct of divine Providence toward the true worshippers; which confession of their fault, and acknowledgment of the justice of the divine judgment, run through these verses. The 6th verse alludes to the leprosy, which was the highest degree of uncleanness among the Jews. The prophets frequently borrow their images from the*

8 But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.

9 ¶ Be not wroth very fore, O LORD, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people.

10 Thy holy cities are a wilderness; Zion

is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation.

11 Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste.

12 Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O LORD? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very fore:

received customs and ritual ceremonies of the nations, among which the distinction betwixt things clean and unclean makes no small figure; and under these images they frequently describe moral defects, and religious offences, as in the present passage; which immediately referring to the Jews, the word *righteousness*, or *justifications*, alludes to all those external ceremonies and services wherein they placed merit, and whence they hoped for justification. See Rom. x. 3. and Vitrina.

Ver. 12. *Wilt thou refrain? Wilt thou contain thyself at these things, O JEHOVAH? &c.* Lowth.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. The church's request, desiring some glorious manifestation, as in the days of old: that God would appear for the salvation of his people, and, with vengeance burning as the most vehement fire, terrify and consume their enemies. And this may respect either Christ's first coming in the flesh, to destroy the spiritual enemies of his believing people; or that manifestation of his glory which shall be made, when fire shall come down from heaven, devour the seat of antichrist, and destroy his tyranny; or that appearance of Jesus on the clouds of heaven, when he shall come to judge the world, and all created nature be dissolved in one universal conflagration. *Note*; God will make himself known to all; to his faithful people in mercy, to his enemies in terrible judgment!

2. God had wrought strange wonders of old, therefore his praying people hope for the same interposition. *When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for*; when dejected in Egypt they saw no hopes of deliverance, then did God shew his wonders great and terrible; *thou camest down*, as on mount Sinai, in all the pomp of awful majesty; *the mountains flowed down at thy presence*; and if he be pleased still to appear, all mountains of difficulty shall quickly vanish; and all oppressors, though lofty as the summit of these mighty hills, be laid in the dust.

3. The promises of the great things in store for God's faithful people, more than eye hath seen, or ear heard, strengthened their faith, and quickened their desires of his appearing gloriously and speedily to help them. *For since the beginning of the world, men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him*: great as the wonders of God's mercy in the deliverance of his people have appeared, yet other wonders of mercy and grace, known only to God, are yet in store for them that love him. The apostle, 1 Cor. ii. 9. particularly applies these words to the knowledge of the Gospel truths, which neither the light of nature, nor the deepest researches of human wisdom, could discover, without a revelation from God; nor

even then, till he gave the seeing eye, and opened the understanding to understand the Scriptures: and when the eyes are in a measure enlightened, and we comprehend many truths, we still know but in part; many revealed truths are still mysterious and incomprehensible; and we wait for a more perfect state, when we shall know even as we are known. *Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh in righteousness*; rejoiceth in God his Saviour, in the grace bestowed, and the glory promised; and, in consequence, walks under the influence of the Spirit of holiness, desiring to please God in all things: *those that remember thee in thy ways*; in all instituted ordinances, means of grace, and providences; improving them, in order to maintain nearer communion with God. Now, where souls are thus found waiting on God, he will meet such with his mercies, denoting his readiness to hear, pardon, and save them out of all their troubles. *Note*; (1.) Faith in God will produce patient waiting upon him, and that shall never be disappointed. (2.) Much is yet unknown by us of the riches of grace to which in this life we may attain, and more with respect to the glory prepared for the faithful in eternity. (3.) They who would meet God, must be found in the way of righteousness; out of that we may not expect his presence or blessing. (4.) Cheerfulness in the ways of God is the ornament of our walk, as well as highly our duty. Gloomy and melancholy Christians are a discouragement to his service. (5.) As all God's ways are right, in all let us remember him; in prosperity thankful and humble, in adversity resigned and patient; praising him in all and for all, and assured that all shall work together for our good.

4. Desiring to return to him, they still hope and trust in his promises, notwithstanding their sins. *Behold, thou art wroth, for, or because, we have sinned*, and justly provoked God's displeasure. *In these is continuance*; in the ways of righteousness God's favour would be secured to them: *and we shall therefore be saved* in those blessed ways. Some translate the words, *בהם עולם ונושע* *babem olam-venivvasbeang*, *In these, our sins, we have been ever*, being thus conceived, and from the womb transgressors; *yet we shall be saved*, sincerely coming to thee through the riches of a Redeemer's grace extending to the case of the most desperate sinner. *Note*; While we see and lament our sins, acknowledge God's justice in our punishment, and cast our souls at his feet, we cannot perish there.

2dly, They had confessed, *We have sinned*; now they enlarge on their transgressions, confessing and bewailing them, justifying God in their afflictions, acknowledging their own unworthiness of the grace which they called for, and, pleading their misery, cast themselves on his mercy.

1. They confess their guilty state. *But we are all as an unclean*

## C H A P. LXV.

*The calling of the Gentiles. The Jews, for their incredulity, idolatry, and hypocrisy, are rejected. A remnant will be saved. Judgments on the wicked, and blessings on the godly. The blessed state of the new Jerusalem.*

[Before Christ 698.]

**I** AM fought of *them that asked not for me*; I am found of *them that fought me not*: I

unclean thing, or person, which is the state of every man by nature; and they whose eyes are most enlightened to know their real condition, will most lament their deep and desperate guilt and corruption within, till Christ be fully revealed. This also particularly respected the deplorable estate of the Jewish people, who were sunk almost universally into the dregs of iniquity. *And all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags*, naturally most impure: which is true, not only of the ceremonial righteousnesses of forms, and rites, and outward devotions, but of all moral righteousness arising from self-confidence, and intended to commend us to God for pardon and acceptance.

2. They acknowledge the general carelessness and neglect of God's worship. *And there is none that calleth upon thy name*; none, comparatively speaking, who had any desire to seek God for pardon or grace. There is none that *stirreth up himself to take hold of thee*; they who performed their devotions, did it either to support a good opinion of themselves, or through the force of habit, and were so lifeless, lukewarm, and negligent in them, that they knew nothing of the impertunity of prayer, or the wrestlings of faith; and such services added but to the number of their sins. *Note*; (1.) There is not a surer proof of a careless and lost soul, than the neglect of private prayer. (2.) The life of prayer is faith, which lays hold of God's promises, and will not quit him without a blessing. (3.) Our cold hearts need much to be stirred up to the work of prayer, for spiritual sloth is grievously apt to creep even upon believers.

3. They own their afflictions to be the fruit of their sins. *We all do fade as a leaf*; our professions wither, our root is sapless, our boughs blasted; *and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away*. As the autumnal blasts shake down the withered leaf, and hurl it away, so did the wrath of God, because of their iniquities, disperse them first in Chaldea and the countries of the Babylonish monarchy; and now the dispersion is become universal. *For thou hast bid thy face from us in displeasure, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities*. *Note*; False professors, however blooming they may for a time appear, will quickly be blasted: usually in this world their decays are manifest; at least, at death their leaf falls, and the wind of vengeance hurls them into hell.

4. They plead their relation to God, notwithstanding the prevailing iniquity. Some were still found faithful, and, as a people, God had not cast them all away. *But now, O Lord, thou art our Father*; though we have done so much against thee, we cannot quit this endeared relation: correct us as a father, but do not utterly disinheret us. *We are the clay, and thou our potter*; mould us to thy will;

said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation *that was not called by my name*.

2 I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way *that was not good*, after their own thoughts;

3 A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in-

we are content to be and suffer according to thy pleasure; only remember, *we are all the work of thy hand*, created by thy power, by peculiar mercy collected into a people, therefore destroy not thine own work.

5. They intreat, if not the removal of their sufferings, yet a mitigation of them, and some prospect of their end. *Be not wroth very sore, O Lord*; correct us but in measure, not in fierce anger, lest we be utterly consumed: *neither remember iniquity for ever*; but forgive at last, and remove from us thy heavy hand. *Behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people*; and therefore, though thou visit our iniquities with the rod, and our sin with scourges, yet take not thy loving-kindness utterly from us.

6. They spread their miserable state before God. Their cities desolate and in ruins, their country a wilderness, and Zion's palaces lying in the dust; and, what was still a bitterer cause of anguish, their *holy and beautiful house*, that temple so magnificent and glorious, where the Shechinah once abode, and holy worship was offered to God, where their fathers of old praised the Lord, is now *burned up with fire*, which *was the consummation of their miseries*: *and all our pleasant things are laid waste*; not merely their palaces and possessions ruined, but, above all, their sacrifices ceased, their feasts of gladness at an end, the worship of God interrupted, and no more songs of praise resound in the courts of the Lord's house. *Note*; (1.) Human misery is an object of the divine compassions. (2.) They who have truly at heart the interests of God's kingdom, are more concerned for the desolations of the spiritual temple, than for any losses of their own.

7. They humbly and earnestly expostulate with the Lord on their unhappy case. *Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things? shall not jealousy for thine own glory awake? thy bowels of mercy yearn over our miseries? Wilt thou hold thy peace*, as an unconcerned spectator of these things, *and afflict us very sore? shall there be no end nor abatement of our sufferings? surely thou wilt not contend for ever: arise, O Lord, plead thy own and thy people's cause!* *Note*; Though God long and heavily afflict sinners, let them not utterly despair, if they sincerely desire, and determine to return to him.

## C H A P. LXV.

THIS chapter, containing the third section of the fifth discourse, may be divided into two parts; the FIRST part, defending the equity and justice of the ways of God, contains, *first*, an hypothesis preparatory to the conviction of those who presume to find fault; namely, the calling of the Gentiles to the communion of the church, ver. 1. *Secondly*, the *first* conviction of the Jewish nation follows,

for

gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick;

4 Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine's flesh; and broth of abominable *things is in* their vessels;

5 Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These *are* a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.

6 Behold, *it is* written before me: I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom,

7 Your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the LORD, which have burned incense upon the mountains, and

blasphemed me upon the hills: therefore will I measure their former work into their bosom.

8 ¶ Thus saith the LORD; As the new wine is found in the cluster, and *one* saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing *is* in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all.

9 And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there.

10 And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me.

for their manifest apostacy from God: where we have their *sins*, of rejecting the divine calling, ver. 2. of infamous and detestable superstition, ver. 3, 4. of intolerable hypocrisy, ver. 5. Then the *punishment* ordained for these crimes, ver. 6, 7. together with the alleviation of this punishment in regard to the faithful, ver. 8—10. *Thirdly*, a second conviction, directed by way of apostrophe to the impenitent and disobedient: where, 1. their crimes are set forth, particularly their idolatry, ver. 11. then the punishment determined for those crimes, is mentioned absolutely, ver. 12. and relatively to the true worshippers of God, ver. 13—15. In the *SECOND part*, which is consolatory, we have *first* a general promise concerning the faith of the true God to be received every where, and the condition of the new heavens and the new earth, ver. 16, 17. *secondly*, the special blessings which the church should enjoy at this time: *first*, pure joy, disturbed by no evils or mourning, ver. 18, 19. *secondly*, longevity, ver. 20. *thirdly*, a secure possession of all those blessings, ver. 21—23. *fourthly*, an intimate communion between heaven and earth, ver. 24. and *lastly*, a demolition of the power and malice of Satan and his agents, ver. 25. There can be no doubt that this section, like those preceding, refers to that future and glorious state of the church, which from this and other similar prophecies we have reason to expect after the conversion of the Jews.

*Ver. 1. I am sought, &c.] I am made known to those that asked not for me, &c.* Lowth. You observe here the Divinity introduced, urging an argument of his grace, in calling the Gentiles to his communion, and soon after complaining of the obstinate disobedience of the refractory Jews, who had for so long a time despised the divine power. *I have spread out my hands, in the next verse, signifies, "I have taught, intreated, or called;"* to each of which actions spreading out of the hands belongs. See Neh. viii. 9. in the original.

*Ver. 3, 4. That sacrificeth in gardens, &c.]* The superstition of the Jews is here reprov'd: the passage is not to be understood literally, but mystically (see ch. lxvi. 17.); the prophet herein figuratively setting forth their shameful

and detestable deviation from the true faith and the practice of holiness and virtue, which was as hateful and offensive to God as the most odious sacrifices, and vilest superstitions of idolatry.

*Ver. 5. Which say, Stand by thyself, &c.]* In the following section, ch. lxvi. 5. the crime of hypocrisy as here is decry'd, and every reader will easily recognize in both places the Pharisees and their followers. See Luke, xviii. 10. There cannot be a more lively description of spiritual pride and hypocritical arrogance than these words afford us.

*Ver. 6, 7. Behold, it is written, &c.]* The first words of this passage allude to the subsequent sentence. *Behold, it is written before me;* "It is absolutely written and determined in the divine court, that such shall be your punishment." Bishop Warburton observes upon the 7th verse, that the execution of the law, wherein the visiting of the iniquity of the parents upon the children is menaced, was appropriated by God to himself. But God has not only reserved this method of punishment to himself, but has likewise graciously condescended to inform us in this passage, after what manner he was pleas'd to administer it. This verse, like the third and fourth, is to be understood figuratively. See Matt. xxiii. 34, 35. We may render the last words, *Therefore will I measure out their former wages, or the old arrears into their laps.*

*Ver. 8—10. Thus saith the Lord, &c.] Thus, &c. as when one findeth a good grape in the cluster, and saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it, &c.* Lowth. See ch. x. 22, 23. where a promise similar to this is given. The proposition of divine grace, respecting the faithful, is contained in the 8th verse, and more fully explained in the 9th and 10th. In chap. xvii. we have a simile of nearly the same kind, and equally elegant with that in ver. 8. The meaning is, that if in a bunch of bad grapes a good one or two be found, full of *good juice*, wherein *is the blessing*, the vintager selects it from the rest, and does not destroy it, as expecting it to come to perfection; so God would not destroy the whole nation of the Jews, but preserve it for the sake of a few righteous persons to be found among them.

11 ¶ But ye *are* they that forsake the LORD, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for that troop, and that furnish the drink-offering unto that number.

12 Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose *that* wherein I delighted not.

13 Therefore, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed:

14 Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart; but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit.

15 And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord GOD shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name.

16 That he who blefseth himself in the

earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes.

17 ¶ For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

18 But be ye glad and rejoice for ever *in that* which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.

19 And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.

20 There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner *being* an hundred years old shall be accursed.

21 And they shall build houses and inhabit *them*; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.

them. It is added in the next verse, that to these faithful worshippers of God, as a reward of their duty and constancy, should be granted the secure inhabitation and possession of the land of Canaan, and of Jerusalem, built upon the holy mountains, here called the mountains of God; together with the free use of the flourishing fields and meadows of that country; such as were Scharon and Achor. See Hosea, ii. 15. Cantic. ii. 1. Achor was a valley to the north of Jericho, opposite to the town of Ai, where Achan was put to death, and which was remarkably fertile. Josh. vii. 26.

Ver. 11. But ye are they that forsake the Lord, &c.] But, &c. Who prepare a table for Gad [the sun], and serve or fill up a drink-offering to Meni [the moon]. The prophet here renews his reproach against the apostate and covenant-breaking Jews, who, forsaking Jehovah, that is to say, separating themselves from the true worship of God, (see ch. i. 4.) and at the same time deserting the place which God had appointed for his worship, polluted themselves with idolatry the most abominable and shameful in his sight. The translation above given is from Vitringa, who with much learning justifies and shews its propriety. See ver. 3, 4.

Ver. 15. And ye shall leave your name, &c.] Vitringa reads, Ye shall leave your name for an oath to my chosen: the meaning, says he, is, that the punishment and calamity of these apostates should be so remarkable, that in the forms of swearing men should take their example from the severity of the divine judgment inflicted upon them, and from their miserable state; saying, "If I knowingly and wilfully deceive, may as great calamities happen to me, as have happened to these wicked and apostate

"Jews!" See Jer. xxix. 22. The Lord shall slay thee, is thought to allude to the total abolition of the Jewish œconomy. The following verse seems to justify the translation and interpretation given by Vitringa.

Ver. 17. For, behold, I create, &c.] Vitringa observes, that these expressions signify a new and better form of religion, to be introduced into the church, the old and inferior one being abolished. It is plain, from what follows, that the prophet here foretels a future and highly-improved state of religion and felicity, greater than has yet been experienced in the church of Christ: see Rev. xix. 7—9.

Ver. 20. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, &c.] No more shall there be an infant short-lived; nor an old man who hath not fulfilled his days: for he that dieth at an hundred years, shall die a boy; and the sinner that dieth at an hundred years shall be deemed accursed. Lowth. The prophet in this verse promises longevity as a necessary adjunct to the felicity of the state which he is describing; and as a proof of this longevity, he mentions, that he who shall die by any extraordinary cause, aged a hundred years, shall be thought to die a child; while the sinner, to be taken off by divine judgment, is not to be thought burdened with age, but punished for his crimes, though he be a hundred years old. Vitringa does not understand this passage in the letter, but metaphorically; as much as to say, "In this holy city, there shall be no violent or punitive death; but, all the inhabitants being holy, all shall die full of days and happy, and shall have, as it were, a foretaste, a pledge and earnest of life eternal, in their long and happy life below." See chap. xxv. 8.

Ver.

22 They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

23 They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the

blest of the LORD, and their offspring with them.

24 And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the

*Ver. 22. For as the days of a tree are the days of my people]* The prophet here describing another privilege of the church in these happy days, says, that the faithful at this time shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. He subjoins: *They shall not plant, that another may eat*, which might happen either from enemies, who might seize their fruits, or from their own immature death before those fruits were brought to perfection: intent upon which thought, and on the longevity promised, ver. 20. he adds, that this inconvenience was not to be feared, because the days of the people of God,—of each of the faithful, *should be as the days of a tree*; that is to say, should endure as long as the trees planted by them. Their age should equal the duration of a tree, whether of a vine, or of any other. This is more fully illustrated in the next article; and mine elect, &c. shall out-wear, or out-last, the work of their hands: they shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth children to no purpose.

*Ver. 24. And it shall come to pass]* Behold here an excellent blessing, the truest seal of divine favour and paternal love. We have observed in the analysis, that the closest conjunction of heaven and earth, that is to say, of God and men, is expressed in this verse; wherein the readiness and goodness of God to hear the petitions, and even to prevent the desires, of those who love and serve him, are spoken of in the strongest and most pleasing terms. See ch. xxx. 19. and Pf. cxlv. 18, 19.

*Ver. 25. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together]* The meaning is, that the church at this time shall be free from all internal and external enemies: the wolves and lions, mystically so called, being either destroyed by the power of God, or, they who formerly were such being softened and changed by the grace of the divine Spirit: so that though they were able to hurt, they shall no longer be willing to do so. See chap. xi. 6—9. The phrase, *Dust shall be the serpent's meat*, seems immediately to allude to the sentence passed upon the old serpent, Gen. iii. 14. which, Isaiah tells us, shall be fulfilled at the period here alluded to; when the devil shall no longer be able to hurt the church, but shall be reduced to the most abject, groveling, and despicable state. So it is said, Micah, vii. 17. of the enemies of the church, that *they shall lick the dust like a serpent*: what, therefore, is magnificently foretold in the 91st psalm, of the subjection of Satan to Jesus Christ and his church, and which was formerly fulfilled in Christ, shall at this time be fulfilled in the whole body of the church. See chap. xl. 10. xlix. 24. *The Son of God came into the world to destroy the works of the devil*; Rom. xvi. 20. 1 John, iii. 8. These will be the illustrious consequences of the creation of the new heavens and the new earth. Indeed, to bestow such blessings on the church, is, in the language of prophecy, truly to create new heavens and a new earth.

God Almighty render us worthy, and grant us speedily the completion, of these glorious promises! See Vittinga.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The application of these words to the conversion of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews, is fixed by an infallible expositor, Rom. x. 20, 21.

1. The Gentiles, by divine grace and mercy, are brought into the Christian church; and this not only when they had no desert, but in general, when the Gospel was first offered to them, no desire after God. He sent his ministers among them, calling to them to behold him, his Son, his Gospel, when they had no thoughts about this great salvation, nor stood, as the Jews, in any near relation to him as a people; but they were not disobedient to the heavenly vision; when he called, they answered; when he drew them, they sought him early; Acts xiii. 42—48. Note; (1.) If God did not first seek us, we should never have inquired after him. (2.) When he is graciously manifesting himself in mercy to us, it becomes us to seek him earnestly in all his appointed ways.

2. The Jews for their impenitence and rebellion are rejected by him. With long patience God bore with them; by a variety of means and methods he had sought to reclaim them; after sending all his prophets, he last of all sent his Son; yet vain was every attempt of Christ and his apostles, inviting them by every endearing plea to turn from the evil of their ways; they obstinately persisted in their own inventions, seeking to establish a legal righteousness, and, riveted in their pride and prejudices to the ceremonial institutions, rejected the counsel of God against themselves. Their fathers' sin had been gross and impious idolatry, forsaking God for stocks and stones, and leaving his temple and altar for groves and altars of their own erecting, where they burnt incense, and offered sacrifices to their idols; and this openly without a blush, as if wilfully designing to provoke God to his face, by their daring impiety, and contempt of his service; addicted to necromancy, and among the graves and monuments consulting the dead, or the evil spirits that were supposed to haunt those melancholy abodes; paying no regard to the distinctions of clean and unclean ordained by the law, but eating swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things. Now these iniquities of their fathers, whose measure they filled up, God would visit upon them; for, though the Jews of our Saviour's day were cured of their idolatries, yet their pride and hypocrisy were yet more detestable; which say, *Stand by thyself; come not near to me, for I am holier than thou*; so high in their own conceits, and so holy, that they looked down with contempt on others, and thought defilement was contracted even by their touch. *These are a smoke in my nose*, offensive and loathsome; *a fire that burneth all*

bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. holy mountain, saith the LORD.  
They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my

all the day; a continual provocation, against which his indignation and wrath burned like fire. For these abominations God will plead with them, and with just judgment recompense them for their iniquities; and all the former sins should come into the dreadful account, and be required of the men of that generation, Luke, xi. 51. *Note;* (1.) Sooner or later God will visit for sin, and woe to the soul on whom the vengeance due to it shall be laid! (2.) Nothing is in God's sight more odious than a sinner vaunting his own holiness, and proudly looking down with contempt on others. (3.) Though vengeance may be long delayed, it will surely come at last, when the measure of the sinner's iniquity is full.

2dly, Though the generality of the Jewish people were rejected for their unbelief and rebellion, there was yet a remnant which would accept of the offers of grace.

1. This is represented by a cluster of grapes, hanging on a blighted vine, which the dresser of the vineyard, seeing it in general withered, is ready to cut down; but the master stays his hand for the sake of that one cluster, and because it shews also that there still is life, and the tree may again revive. *Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it.*

2. God promises, not only, for his servants' sake, not to destroy them all, but to bring a seed out of Jacob and out of Judah, to inherit his holy mountain, the church; and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there, enjoying all the ordinances, and enriched with all spiritual gifts and graces, as the flocks and herds which fed in the green pastures of Sharon and Achor; which was fulfilled in the multitude of those Jewish converts called by the preaching of the apostles, who were also themselves all of the stock of Judah or Benjamin, and by whose labours the spiritual seed of Jacob throughout the world was so exceedingly increased. *Note;* (1.) Those who are termed in Scripture the elect of God are known by their earnestness in seeking God, and their fidelity in serving him. (2.) None ever sought God in truth, but found him their exceeding great reward.

3dly, The body of the Jewish people persisted in their impiety and infidelity: to these God now addresses himself.

1. They are upbraided with their sins.

[1.] Apostasy from God and his service. *Ye are they that forsake the Lord, that forget my holy mountain; they rejected his government, and neglected his worship. Note;* They who forsake the Lord forsake their own mercies.

[2.] Idolatry. *That prepare a table for that troop, and that furnish the drink-offering unto that number;* their idols so multiplied, and yet so liberally supplied with offerings, while God's altar was utterly neglected. Some suppose the words גַּד Gad and מְנִי Meni, rendered by troop and number, to be the names of their idols, and to signify the sun and moon. *Note;* Men, to gratify their lusts, grudge no expence; and shall we then be niggards in the service of the Lord?

[3.] Obstinate impenitence. The former more properly were their fathers' sins, though to be visited upon them as a nation; this was the especial guilt of the Jews in our Saviour's day. *When I called, ye did not answer; when I spake,*

*ye did not hear:* nay, though he became incarnate in his own glorious person, to preach and teach the way of life, they rejected his words and warnings, contradicting and blaspheming; but did evil before mine eyes, following determinedly the imaginations of their own evil hearts, and adding to all the rest that daring consummation of their evil, the crucifying the Lord of life and glory: and did choose that wherein I delighted not, the traditions of the elders, and those false glosses which destroyed the spirit of God's word; and shewed that pride, hypocrisy, and enmity against the Gospel, which were so peculiarly provoking to him.

2. Their punishment is denounced. I will number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter; and dreadful was the massacre which the Roman soldiers made of them. *Note;* When God fights against the sinner, resistance is vain, for he will overcome.

3. The blessedness of God's people, as contrasted with their misery, will aggravate their doom. *Note;* It will be an additional torment to the miseries of the damned, to see the righteous in the kingdom of God, and themselves cast out. This is instanced in three particulars.

[1.] The one shall be consumed with famine and want, the other enjoy plenty and affluence, which was literally the case, when the Christians, before the siege of Jerusalem, removed to Pella; while the Jews, who were besieged, terribly perished by famine. And also spiritually, those who reject Christ and his Gospel, and seek to fill themselves with the comforts of earth, will ever be unsatisfied here, and in hell want a drop of water to assuage their raging thirst; while his faithful people, who feed upon him in his promises, find the hidden manna sweet and nourishing to their souls, and drink of those consolations which are better than wine; and these but foretastes of the provision that God hath made for them in the eternal world, where they shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more, the most boundless desires of their souls being satisfied in the fruition of God.

[2.] God's servants shall rejoice and sing, when his enemies are ashamed, and with anguish cry out in their pangs. The paths of heavenly wisdom are full of present peace and joy; the paths of sin all lead to shame and misery. And how much greater still will the difference appear, when these shall be rejoicing in glory, and joining the songs of angels, while the sinner is covered with everlasting confusion, and gnawing his tongue for pain, in those eternal torments where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

[3.] The one shall be detested and infamous, the other honourable and distinguished. Hence the Jews are become peculiarly stigmatized; but God's people have a new and honourable name, Christians, or Hephzibah and Beulah, intimating the Lord's love and delight in them: *That he who blesseth himself in the earth, who looks for God's blessing, or thankfully acknowledges the mercies received from him, shall bless himself in the God of truth,* as the pious servants of God ever do, esteeming God as their great portion, and expecting from him all their mercies: or, shall bless themselves

§ D

selves

## C H A P. LXVI.

*The glorious God will be served in humble sincerity: he comforteth the humble with the marvellous generation, and with the gracious benefits of the church. God's severe judgments against the wicked. The Gentiles shall have a holy church, and see the damnation of the wicked.*

[Before Christ 698.]

**T**HUS saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my foot-

*elves in God, Amen; in Jesus Christ, who is the Amen, the faithful and true witness. Rev. iii. 14. And he that sweareth in the earth, which is an act of religious worship, shall swear by the God of truth, to whom alone the solemn appeal ought to be made; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from my eyes; either the idolatry and superstition of the Gentile world, which were a grief to God's people, but at this time shall be rooted out; or the carnal ordinances, which were a heavy yoke, and were by Christ's sacrifice abolished; and this sense seems best to suit the following words.*

4thly, We see,

1. A new creation rise at God's command, new heavens expanded, a new earth framed, and these so glorious, that they obliterate the remembrance of the former; which some refer to the Gospel-day, when such a wondrous change should be wrought in the hearts of men, that it should be said, *Old things are past away; behold, all things are become new,* 2 Cor. v. 17. Others suppose this will be fulfilled during the latter days' glory of the church; others, again, not till after the dissolution of all things, and that Christ will then come, and not before, and reign with his saints upon earth a thousand years; and to this they conceive the apostles to refer, Rev. xxi. 1—5. 2 Pet. iii. 13. whilst others look farther, and interpret this of the state and blessedness of the saints of God in glory everlasting.

2. This will give occasion of everlasting joy to faithful souls. *But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create, as partakers of the blessed change which the Gospel works, and inheritors of the eternal glory that God bestows. For behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy; with such consolation shall the church and every member of it be filled, and all her friends rejoice with and over her, because of her prosperity. The voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her; there shall be no alloy or interruption of her joys, but they shall be constant and full, like the source from whence they flow.*

3. God himself will rejoice in his own work. *And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people, when, through the infinite merit of Jesus, and the effectual work of the divine Spirit, they shall be wholly renewed in body, soul, and spirit, and become the blessed objects of God's full complacence.*

4. In this blessed state there shall be no untimely deaths, as now when we see the infant carried almost from the womb to the grave; and few, even of those who are aged, reach the full limits appointed to the life of man: the contrary to which many pious commentators suppose will

stool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?

2 For all those *things* hath mine hand made, and all those *things* have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, *even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.*

3 He that killeth an ox *is as if* he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, *as if* he cut

literally be the case in the latter day, when, among other instances of temporal blessings, long life shall be enjoyed. But the words may be also taken in a spiritual sense, as intimating that the youngest convert who departs, shall be raised in the fulness of the measure of the stature of Christ, as if he had lived a hundred years; and those whose lives have been longer spent in Christ's service shall have their full reward in glory; while the sinner, to whatever extent God lengthens out his days, will be accursed at the last. *Note;* (1.) We need not grieve for early converts snatched away by death; they are happily entered into their rest, and the space taken from the labours of time, shall be added to the rewards of eternity. (2.) An aged saint is a venerable object, an aged sinner the most pitiable and deplorable. (3.) However long God's patience bears with the sinner, his curse will overtake him at last.

5. Their possessions shall not be precarious, nor their enjoyments interrupted. The houses they build, the vineyards they plant, no enemy shall possess, nor spoiler destroy; but these pious souls shall long, peaceably, and comfortably enjoy the blessings which their God bestows upon them: *for as the days of a tree, are the days of my people; as the days of an oak, which lives for ages.*

6. Their children after them shall inherit their blessings. *They shall not labour in vain, but see the blessing of God upon all the work of their hands: nor bring forth for trouble; their children shall be their comfort, not their sorrow: for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them: their mercies descend to their posterity, together interested in the same Gospel covenant, and prevented and followed with the blessings of divine goodness.*

7. A wondrous change shall pass upon the tempers of men. *The wolf and the lamb shall feed together; Gentiles and Jews shall now become one fold, and men of the most savage dispositions be brought to the meekness of the lamb: and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock; ravening persecutors not only brought to be men of peace, but laborious ministers, as in the case of Paul and others: and dust shall be the serpent's meat; the sentence pronounced on the devil, Gen. iii. 14. and, in him, on all the enemies of God's church and people, shall be fulfilled; they shall be trodden under the feet of God's victorious saints. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, but their power be utterly broken, and themselves ruined, saith the Lord, whose word is faithful, and the accomplishment of it sure.*

CHAP.



off a dog's neck ; he that offereth an oblation, *as if he offered swine's blood* ; he that burneth incense, *as if he blessed an idol*. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations.

4 I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them ; because when I called, none did answer ; when I spake they did not hear : but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose *that* in which I delighted not.

## C H A P. LXVI.

THERE is so great an affinity between this and the former section, that the prophet preserves nearly the same order, and repeats many of the same phrases which he had made use of in the last and the foregoing sections. It is divided into two parts. In the former of which we have, *first*, a proposition, exhibiting reproof and consolation. The reproof, ver. 1—4. where God, in a sublime discourse, occurs to a doubt, which might be raised against a change in the œconomy of the church ; namely, that it did not seem probable, that God would forsake his temple, ver. 1, 2. He declares his sense of sacrifices, and of carnal worship from hypocrites, and that under the œconomy of grace, ver. 3, and threatens a severe and imminent judgment upon sinners, ver. 4. The consolation is directed to those who fear God ; the discourse, by an apostrophe, being turned to them : which consolation is derived from the severe and public *vengeance* which God would inflict upon those who despised them, ver. 5, 6.—from the *calling* of the Gentiles, and from the success of that call, ver. 7. the wonderfulness whereof is shewn, ver. 8. and the cause, ver. 9.—and from the *joyful consequences* of this call, namely, the benefits of divine grace to be conferred upon this new church ; where we have an excitation to joy from this hope, ver. 10. while those benefits are declared at large, ver. 11—14. An exposition or confirmation of this prophecy is added ; wherein the mode of the vengeance to be taken upon the apostates by fire and sword is set forth, ver. 15, 16 ; and the cause of so great a severity, namely, the grievous and detestable crimes of the hypocrites, ver. 17, 18. The manner of calling his ancient people back to Canaan is then set forth ; *first*, with respect to the instrumental causes,—middle of ver. 18. and 19. ; *secondly*, with respect to the manner of bringing them, ver. 20. and *thirdly*, the privileges of those who are brought are described, ver. 21. In the SECOND part of this section we have the epilogue, or conclusion of the whole prophecy ; setting forth the condition and treatment of the true worshippers of God, and of hypocrites, in all times of the church of the new covenant, until the creation of the new heavens and the new earth attains its perfect completion, with respect to the faithful and the hypocrites, ver. 22—24.

Ver. 1, 2. *Thus saith the Lord, &c.*] God here makes use of a sublime discourse, suitable to his Majesty, to reach the genuine sense whereof we must consider it as directed to the hypocrites, who supposed the care of the temple and sacrifice to be the principal and most acceptable part of worship in the sight of God. The words may be thus paraphrased : “ Why, ye hypocrites, do ye build and adorn my temple upon earth with so much labour ? If I regarded a visible temple as the place of manifesting my glory, I have one of the highest excellence and splendor

“ in the heavens, which I have prepared for my glory”  
 “ and for the use of the celestial hosts. In which view  
 “ the whole earth, and whatever is made of earth and terrestrial matter, (as is every temple, however splendid)  
 “ ought to be considered as my footstool.” (See chap. lvii. 15.) Further, “ whatever is your boast, from building me a house, all this is vain ; for my hand hath formed  
 “ all these things, and they have all existed by my power  
 “ and will ; so that you can confer upon God nothing but  
 “ what is his own.” See Ps. l. 12. Though therefore God, for the reasons of his providence toward his church, *permitted*, for he did not *command*, David or Solomon to build him a material temple ; yet he would not have it esteemed as his true house, or seem on this account to be indebted to the builders. He only, according to his wisdom, was willing to indulge the Israelites, that in the time of the infancy of the church, they might substitute a figurative in the room of the true house of the Lord. The discourse rises ; “ Nay,” saith the Lord, “ not even the  
 “ celestial house is acceptable to me : I have another,  
 “ more noble, pure, and agreeable to my nature, the *true*  
 “ place of my rest ; namely, men formed and prepared by  
 “ grace to receive the influx of the Divine Spirit ;” which is thus expressed, *To this man will I look, to him who is poor and contrite in spirit, and who trembleth at my word.* See ch. lvii. 15. Matth. v. 3. Ps. cxxxviii. 6. Vitringa is of opinion, that this discourse is directed to the hypocrites, who, despising the Gospel of the Son of God, after they had made the temple a den of thieves, were yet zealous to repair and adorn that temple : they did not consider that, a new œconomy being established, no earthly and material temple could be acceptable to the God whose throne was in heaven, and who every where found the place of his rest in the humble and contrite heart.

Ver. 3. *He that killeth an ox, &c.*] God here shews, that the external ritual worship offered to him by hypocrites and wicked persons, void of faith and holiness, was no more estimable in his sight, than the material temple above spoken of ; but that he was as much offended by the ritual worship of the impure, as by the most grievous crimes perpetrated against the immediate commands of the law, and particularly under the new œconomy, after the promulgation of the law of liberty, and the perfect and true sacrifice offered by his Son, to expiate the sins of the world. The sentence may be supplied, *He who killeth an ox*, [with the dispositions above mentioned] *is* [esteemed guilty of as great a crime in the sight of God] *as he who killeth a man.* *As if he cut off a dog's neck*, means, in order to sacrifice it. This animal was held in the greatest abhorrence by the Jews ; inasmuch, that the very *price of a dog* was forbidden to be brought into the house of the Lord. See Deut. xxiii. 18. *As if he blessed an idol*, means, as if he honoured an idol with gifts and presents. See Vitringa.

5 ¶ Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, and cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed.

6 A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the LORD that rendereth recompence to his enemies.

7 ¶ Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man-child.

8 Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.

9 Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the LORD: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut *the womb*? saith thy God.

10 ¶ Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her:

11 That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory.

12 For thus saith the LORD: Behold I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon *her* sides, and be dandled upon *her* knees.

13 As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

14 And when ye see *this*, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb; and the hand of the LORD shall be known towards his servants, and *his* indignation towards his enemies.

*Ver. 5. Hear the word of the Lord, &c.]* Hear, &c. your brethren who hated you, who cast you out, say, Jehovah shall be glorified for, or on account of, my name: but we shall see your joy, &c. Vitringa supposes that the apostles and followers of Christ, the seed of the first church, who were to constitute that spiritual temple which God had determined to build and inhabit, upon the abolition of the material temple, are here addressed, and comforted by God, on account of the contempt, hatred, and excommunication of them, by their brethren among the Jews and Pharisees. See John, xvi. 2. The words, *the Lord shall be glorified for my name*, that is to say, for that profession of faith which we hold, and of which we are the authors and teachers; these words belong to the pharisaical professors of religion; and the answer, *but we shall see your joy, &c.* to the prophetic chorus, or the true believers. See chap. lxxv. 5. The meaning of the next verse is, that God by his providence should so direct matters, that a hostile army should break in upon the city and temple, with great tumults and warlike shouts, and that these forces should be considered as the executors of his vengeance, and their tumult and clamours as his voice, at this time rendering recompence to his enemies. See Zech. xiv. 13. and Vitringa.

*Ver. 7. Before she travailed, &c.]* Another consolatory argument is here urged, to those who reverence the word of Jehovah, who form the true Sion, taken from the sudden and wonderful increase of the church among the Gentiles, superior to all human thoughts and expectation; for from the 9th and 11th verses it appears abundantly, that these words are thus connected with the context. Isaiah in the former section had done two things; first, predicted the call of the Gentiles; and then the punishment of those who rejected the Gospel. In this section, after he had repeated the indignation conceived by God against the hypocrites and

rejectors of the Gospel, he in the same manner consoles the pious Jews, from the unexpected event of the wonderful success of the calling of the Gentiles, who, joined with them in one body, should form one church, and inherit the earth. The metaphor here used, is very frequent in the Scripture, and very easily understood in the present passage; which is illustrated sufficiently by the following verses.

*Ver. 11. That ye may milk out, &c.]* That ye may draw forth the delicious nourishment from her abundant stores. Lowth.

*Ver. 12. Behold, &c.]* Behold, I will diffuse peace over her like the river [Euphrates], and the glory of the Gentiles as the flowing Nile: Ye shall suck, ye shall be carried at her side, &c.

*Ver. 14. And when ye see this, &c.]* When the true believers, at the time of this distinguished mercy of God to his church, should observe his favour to them, and his punishment of their enemies, full of joy they should triumph in the salvation of Jehovah; their *understanding* of the divine will, their *faith, hope*, and all the spiritual dispositions which support their state, here metaphorically called *bones*, as in other places, (see ch. lvii. 11. Pl. xxxiv. 21, &c.) should acquire greater strength, and, indued as it were with new life, should put forth the flourishing fruits of piety, love, zeal, and good works; that is to say, should grow green, should germinate, should greatly flourish; which is the force of the original word פָּרַח *parach*: And the brighter the proofs were of the *hand* or power of Jehovah, exerted for the advantage of his people, and of his indignation and severity toward their enemies, which this last period of the church should afford, so much the greater cause for rejoicing should the church have at that time: so much the stronger should their faith and hope be found, and their good works abound and flourish. See Vitringa, who reads the last clause, *And the hand of the Lord shall be conspi-*

15 ¶ For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.

16 For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many.

17 They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the LORD.

18 ¶ For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and

see my glory.

19 And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles.

20 And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the LORD out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD.

*conspicuous with his servants, while he shall handle their enemies severely.*

*Ver. 15, 16. For, behold, &c.]* This passage is wholly figurative, exhibiting God, as about to take vengeance upon the enemies of his church, under the figure of a commander and warrior, as well as of a judge, armed at all points, severely to take vengeance upon those who have provoked his indignation. See chap. lxiii. 1, &c. and Rev. xviii. 8. xiv. 20, &c. Some suppose that this passage refers to the general judgment; but it is rather, according to the whole tenor of this prophecy, to be referred to the judgments of God upon the rebellious Jews, and upon the antichristian enemies of the church.

*Ver. 17, 18. They that sanctify themselves]* These verses specify the cause of the extreme severity denounced in those preceding, and are to be understood figuratively, like the expressions used in ver. 3. and in ch. lxv. 3, 4, 11. אָחַר אַחַד *achar achad*, Behind one tree, may be rendered, After Hécate, or Abad, which Abad, or Adad, was an Assyrian idol. See Selden, and Macrob. Saturn. 23. In the midst, may either signify publicly, without any fear or shame, (see ch. xix. 19. lxi. 9.) or it may refer to the idol's being placed in the midst of the sacred grove.

*Ver. 18—20. It shall come, that I will gather, &c.]* The prophet here describes the manner of converting the Gentiles, after the rejection of the greater part of the Jews. Vitringa thinks that this alludes to the first calling of the Gentiles, and that St. Paul manifestly refers to this passage, in his epistle to the Romans, ch. xv. 16. The passage is sufficiently plain from what has gone before in this book. The author of the *Observations* remarks, that in the 20th verse there is an allusion to the mode of travelling in caravans in the East: the editor of the *Ruins of Palmira* tells us, that the caravan which his company formed to go to that place consisted of about 200 persons, and about the same number of beasts of carriage, which were an odd mixture of horses, camels, mules, and asses; but there is no account of any vehicle drawn on wheels in that expedition, nor do we find an account of any such things in other Eastern journeys. There are, however, some vehicles

among them usual for the sick, or for persons of high distinction. Thus Pitt observes, in the account of his return from Mecca, that at the head of each division some great gentleman or officer was carried in a thing like a horse-litter, borne by two camels, one before and the other behind, which is covered all over with scar-cloth, and over that again with green broad-cloth, and set forth very handsomely. If he had a wife attending him, she was carried in another. This is apparently a mark of distinction. There is another Eastern vehicle used in their journeys, which Thevenot calls a *coune*. He tells us, that the counes are hampers, like cradles, carried upon camels' backs, one on each side, having a back, head, and sides, like the great chairs which sick persons sit in. A man rides in each of these counes, and over them is laid a covering, which keeps them both from the rain and sun, leaving as it were a window before and behind, upon the camel's back. The riding in these is also a mark of distinction, according to Maillet; for, speaking of the pilgrimage to Mecca, he says, "Ladies of any figure have litters; others are carried sitting in chairs, made like covered cages, hanging on both sides of a camel; and as for ordinary women, they are mounted on camels without such conveniences after the manner of the Arab women, and cover themselves from sight, and the heat of the sun, as well as they can, with their veils. These are the vehicles which are in present use in the Levant. Coaches, on the other hand, as Dr. Russel assures us, are not in use at Aleppo; nor do we meet with any account of their commonly using them in any other part of the East; but one would imagine, that if ever such conveniences as coaches had been in use, they would not have been laid aside in countries where ease and delicacy are so much consulted. As then the caravans of these returning believers are described by Isaiah as composed like Mr. Dawkins's to Palmira, of horses, and mules, and swift beasts; so I imagine are we to understand the other terms of litters and counes, rather than of coaches, or of chariots, in our common sense of the word. For, though our translators have given us the word *chariot* in many passages of Scripture, yet the *wheel-vehicles* which those writers

21 And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the LORD.

22 For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain.

23 And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath

to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD.

24 And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

“writers speak of, and which our version renders *chariots* in the present text, seem to have been mere warlike machines; nor do we ever read of ladies riding in them. On the other hand, a word derived from the same original is made use of for a seat, however moved, such as the mercy-seat, 1 Chron. xxviii. 18. where our translators have used the word *chariot*, but which was no more of a *chariot*, in the common sense of the word, than a litter is; and that sort of seat, mentioned Levit. xv. 9. which they have rendered *saddle*, seems only to mean a *litter* or a *couch*.” See *Observations*, p. 213. Instead of *Tartessus*, &c. ver. 19. we may read *Tartessus*, *Phile*,—*Ethiopia*, or the *Ethiopians*,—the *Tubareni*, and *Greece*.

Ver. 22. For as the new heavens, &c.] This conclusion connects not only with the preceding period, but with the argument of the two former sections, as well as with the whole book, with respect to its principal scope. For, what scope and end, not only of this book, but of the whole prophetic word, can be fixed upon more properly, than to set forth the history and events of the true church, and its adversaries, both in this mortal life, and in futurity? We may therefore affix a very ample signification to the particle *כי*, for, or because. The above promise of a church to be called from the Gentiles, and to be supported and taught by ministers, appointed by God for that end, from the Gentiles themselves, ver. 21. with the addition of the remnant of the Jews, is here enlarged by the promise of the stability and duration of this eminent blessing. The discourse is directed to the same church of believers in Christ, which the prophet had addressed in all the consolatory periods of this section. As the new heavens and the new earth which God had promised to create, ch. lxxv. 17. were to remain before Jehovah, so should this spiritual church, which was to inherit these new heavens and new earth, remain or continue a glorious church. See Vitringa.

Ver. 23. And it shall come to pass] The meaning is, that in consequence of the creating and perfecting of these new heavens and new earth; that is to say, of establishing this new and spiritual œconomy; all men at length throughout the world, acknowledging and embracing the true religion, should with great zeal, at the stated times, publicly worship and adore God, and that with spiritual worship. For God is a spirit and they who worship him acceptably under the new covenant, must worship him in spirit and in truth. See Zech. xiv. 16. The meaning of the phrase, *From one new moon*, &c. is, *at new moons and sabbaths*, or, *at certain and appointed days*.

Ver. 24. And they shall go forth] We have here the end of all transgressors, of incredulous Jews, and apostate

Christians, like them obstinate in unbelief or apostacy, and hardened in spiritual death, to begin in this world, and to continue for ever. The prophet here speaks of the punishment of sinners, who had been in the communion of the external church, so called, had despised the divine vocation, had excommunicated and oppressed their brethren, see ver. 5. and who are here called, *the men that have transgressed, have rebelled, or revolted against me*.—*They shall go forth*, means those who had joined themselves to the communion of the church, spoken of in the preceding verses. See Matt. viii. 12. Mark, ix. 44, &c. The reader will observe, that the ideas in this verse are figurative; the first figure is taken from the valley of the children of Hinnom; the second from worms preying upon dead bodies. Instead of an *abhorring*, we may read, *an execration*. Our Lord, in his judicial sentence upon the impenitent, will say, *Depart, ye cursed, or, execrated, into eternal fire*: An evil which will be added to their state of pain, and to a condemning conscience: Separated from the communion of God and the saints, cast into the profoundest misery and torment, they will be exposed to the ignominy, contempt, and execration of devils and condemned spirits; unlike the pious, who shall worship for ever before the Lord. These are the different ends of the different kinds of men, the pious and the wicked; in which, after various preparatory judgments of God, the end of all ages will arrive, and our conditions respectively be determined for ever: with which this divine book of our inimitable prophet terminates also. God grant that our lot may be with the holy, with those who reverence the Lord, and love the truth; with the humble, the meek, the merciful, and those who persevere in good works to the end of life; through the grace of our Almighty Lord, Saviour, and Judge, Jesus Christ, who is to distribute these blessings according to the will of his Father! “Full of which hope,” says Vitringa, “and prostrate before his throne, I return, with the most profound humility, my sincerest thanks to God the Father in his Son Jesus Christ by the Spirit, for the grace and light wherewith he hath favoured me, his unworthy servant, during my comment on this book; earnestly requesting of his mercy, that, pardoning the errors into which I have ignorantly fallen, he would render this work conducive to the glory of his great name, the benefit of the church, and the consolation of the pious.”

To conclude.—The regularity, sublimity, and elegance of composition of this divine poem are alone sufficient to recommend it to every reader of taste; but when the depth, the clearness, and extent of the prophecies contained in it, are taken into the account, we shall not be thought to speak too largely

largely when we say, that the book of Isaiah is one of the most complete and excellent of all compositions human or divine, and deserving the most attentive and repeated perusal.

REFLECTIONS,—1st, The grand delusion of the Jewish people was, the confidence they placed in their outward privileges and ritual services, their temple and sacrifices. To undeceive them herein, the prophets and evangelists warn them of the vanity of these things, and that the temple which they so highly prized, would soon be razed from its foundations, as it was by the Chaldeans, and more intirely afterwards by the Romans.

1. The prophet rebukes their mean and unworthy notions of God, as if confined to the temple which they had built, whom heaven, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain: *Thus saith the Lord, the Heaven is my throne, where most transcendently he displays the infinite brightness of his glory; and the earth is my footstool, subject to his government, and at his disposal. Where is the house that ye build unto me? which can contain his immensity, or be worthy of his dignity, who is exalted above all blessing and praise; and where is the place of my rest? who needs no repose, and can take no satisfaction in the wretched fabrics of puny mortals: for all those things hath mine hand made; heaven earth, and the inhabitants of both: and all those things have been, or are, saith the Lord; were created by his power, and subsist by his providence: how impossible, therefore, for this eternal Creator of all to need a temple made with hands, or this omnipresent Deity to be circumscribed within these narrow bounds?*

2. The temple he delights in is not that which consists of hewn stones, and cedars overlaid with gold; a far nobler mansion he hath formed for himself. *To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word; which some interpret of Christ, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the godhead bodily; but more generally may be applied to every believer, who is an habitation of God through the Spirit, and whose character is here delineated; poor in his own eyes, sensible of his spiritual wants and utter weakness; of a contrite heart, broken with a consciousness of intire demerit; and trembling at my word, with that reverence and godly fear which faith inspires; such a heart is the living temple of the Deity.*

3. Their sacrifices are rejected, abolished, abhorred: they were ever detestable, when offered by those whose ways were wickedness; but now to persist in them, and depend upon them for acceptance with God, when the one great sacrifice once offered put a period to the ritual service, was utterly abominable. Murder, idolatry, and the most unclean and forbidden sacrifices, as the offering of a dog, or the blood of swine, were not more highly criminal, and abhorred of God, nor would be attended with deeper and more condign punishment, than the continuance of their incense and oblations, which was now in effect to trample under foot the blood of the Son of God, to reject his Gospel, and do despite to the Spirit of grace. *Note; Many think that they take great pains to save their souls by duties and services springing from a proud unregenerate heart, and will not be persuaded that their trust in these only brings upon them more sure destruction.*

2

4. God gives them up to their own inventions: and you to that soul which he abandons! *Yea, they have chosen their own ways; cleaving to the law for righteousness, they wilfully and obstinately rejected Christ and his salvation; and their soul delighteth in their abominations; they are pleased with their own services, and flatter themselves that God approves them, when in fact he abhors them. Therefore, says he, I also will choose their delusions, giving them up to their own deceived hearts; and will bring their fears upon them; the calamities which they dreaded, especially the horrible devastations of the Romans, who they feared would take away their place and nation, John, xi. 48; which to prevent, they crucified the Redeemer, and thereby most effectually drew upon their own heads the judgments which they sought to avoid: because, when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear; deaf to the preaching of Christ and his apostles, they hardened their hearts in unbelief and impenitence. But they did evil before mine eyes; reviling, blaspheming, persecuting, and at last murdering the Lord Jesus, and utterly rejecting his Gospel; and choose that in which I delighted not; not only the ways of wickedness and sin, but the false confidences of a legal righteousness, and the vain interpretations of oral tradition. Note; (1.) They who are deaf to God's warnings, will be made to feel his wrath. (2.) Wilful rejection of the light is justly punished by God's leaving a sinner to the delusions that he hath chosen, and giving him up to a reprobate mind. (3.) Nothing more is needful to kindle up a hell within sinners' hearts, even on this side the grave, than to bring their own fears upon them.*

2dly, The prophet turns from the disobedient, against whom God's judgments are denounced, to those who trembled at his word; and encourages the humble and contrite with the assurances of God's regard, and his blessing upon them.

1. God will appear to vindicate them against their persecutors. *Your brethren that hated you, and cast you out for my name's sake; as the Jews did the apostles and disciples of Christ, though their brethren, excommunicated them from their synagogues, and were their bitterest and most implacable enemies, stirring up the Gentiles against them in every place; said, Let the Lord be glorified; pretending zeal for his honour, and many really thinking that he who killed them did God service: but he shall appear to your joy, supporting and strengthening them against all opposition, giving success to their labours, and comforting them in all their tribulation: and they shall be ashamed; all their devices baffled, the Gospel spreading in spite of their opposition, and speedy destruction hastening upon their own heads. Note; (1.) A Christian's bitterest foes are often those of his own house. (2.) Church rulers have been in general the chief persecutors in times of persecution, and cover, with the fair pretext of zeal for religion, the enmity of their hearts against the truly faithful ministers, whose boldness, diligence, and exemplary lives, reproach their sloth, negligence, and carnality. (3.) They who suffer for their fidelity, shall find the comforts of God an abundant support and recompense.*

2. Heavy will be the vengeance of God on their enemies. *A voice of noise from the city; the shrieks of the wounded, the groans of the dying, and the shouts of the*

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conquered ~~the temple~~ of lamentation, when set on fire by the Romans; or that which Josephus reports was heard in the temple shortly before its destruction, when the doors flew open of their own accord, and a voice issued from the holy place, crying, *Let us depart hence: A voice of the Lord that rendereth recompense to his enemies*, by whose direction and order all these judgments came upon them.

3. To the wonder and joy of his people, and the confusion and astonishment of his enemies, God will enlarge and establish his church in the earth. *Before she travailed, she brought forth: before her pain came, she was delivered of a man-child.* The church of Christ is represented as a pregnant woman, that immediately, with little or no pain, brings forth her son; so speedily and easily, by the preaching of a single sermon, Acts, ii. 41. were multitudes regenerated and converted to Christ. *Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things?* so strange and uncommon. *Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day?* since the creation the seasons go on in gradual succession, and the fruits require time to ripen them: *or shall a nation be born at once?* which is usually the work of ages: *for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children;* no sooner began the Gospel to be preached, than multitudes both of men and women, as the drops of dew from the womb of the morning, were added to the church daily, Acts, iv. 4. *Shall I bring to the birth, in conviction, and not cause to bring forth, in conversion and regeneration? Shall I cause to bring forth, in one place and age, and shut the womb, saith thy God?* that there should not be a constant succession of spiritual births? *Note;* (1.) Whatever labour, pains, and prayer ministers use according to their bounden duty, so as to be said to travail in birth till Christ be formed in their hearers, it is still God's work to regenerate the soul, and every real convert is born of him. (2.) God will have a church to serve him in the world to the end of time; and we may expect the fulfilment of this prophecy more eminently hereafter, both respecting Jews and Gentiles, Hof. i. 10, 11. Rom. xi. 25, 26.

4. All the friends of Jerusalem are called to rejoice with her, as we congratulate each other on the birth of a son. *Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her.* They who love God love his church and people, have their interests at heart, pray for their peace and prosperity, take delight in her communion, and mourn over her sorrows, afflictions, declensions, and persecutions, and therefore they cannot but partake in her joys as their own: *That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations:* as full breasts afford the sweetest nourishment to the infant, and abundantly supply its wants; so plentiful, so precious, shall the consolations of God's Spirit be to the soul which by faith feeds on the sincere milk of the word, and on those great and precious promises contained in the oracles of God: *that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory;* a glorious Saviour, a glorious Spirit, a glorious provision of promises, a glorious hope, a glorious inheritance: these are the delight of the believing soul, and there is abundance for all who seek it; they may come and milk out from these breasts of glory, to the satisfying of the most boundless desires of their souls.

5. God will give them most abundant cause for joy in the gathering of the Gentiles, and the ruin of every enemy. *For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river; so plentiful, so abundant; peace with God, peace of conscience, peace among themselves, and, like a river full to its margin, it shall flow uninterrupted through the faithful soul into the boundless ocean of eternal joy: and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream;* multitudes of converts shall be made, and these of the mighty and noble, numerous as the drops of water in the river; or, as Egypt by the overflowing of the Nile, the church shall be enriched with their abundance of good things. *Then shall ye suck the milk, the riches of the Gentiles, or the breasts of the church's consolations: ye shall be borne upon her sides, or at her side, as the nurse carries her infant charge, tenderly and safely, and be dandled upon her knees, as the mother with fond delight dandles her darling boy.* And this represents the tenderness with which young converts must be treated, and the delight of the church, her members, and especially her ministers, in those that are born unto her. *As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you;* with that unutterable affection which mothers only know, yea, with tenderness infinitely greater than theirs, will God comfort his people. If he chides, and they return sorrowing, their sorrows melt his heart, and he returns with the kisses of his love to dry up the falling tear; if they be afflicted, he feels with more than human sympathy, with his kind arm supports their reclining head, refreshes them with his consolations, and raises them from the bed of languishing. *And ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem, in the church and her ordinances, where God especially manifests his favour towards his people: and when ye see this, experiencing the wondrous grace of this compassionate God and Saviour, your heart shall rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and your bones shall flourish like an herb;* you shall both be strengthened and comforted with divine consolations, springing up within the heart, as an herb in a well-watered garden, and which will be as marrow to the bones, Prov. xvii. 22. *And the hand of the Lord shall be known towards his servants; his care and protection of them, and kindness towards them, shall be manifested to their comfort and honour, and his great glory; and his indignation towards his enemies, upon whom his vengeance will fall so remarkably and terribly, that they who behold it will own that it is the finger of God.*

3dly, We have here an awful display of the wrath of God revealed from heaven against the ungodliness of men, and a bright prospect of the glory and triumphs of the saints, which, like the pillar of the cloud, gives light to God's Israel, but hangs lowering with vengeance over his enemies.

1. Christ will appear, to the terror of the wicked, in flaming fire, and with fury like a whirlwind, his judgments irresistible as terrible. Arraigned at his bar, and their guilt too glaring to be denied, the sword of inexorable justice is unsheathed, and the multitude of criminals executed. Their crimes are idolatry, superstition, and every abomination committed in defiance of God's law. *They purify themselves in the gardens, and, according to their idolatrous rites, behind one tree in the midst.* Some suppose **TIN** Achad, which

which we render *one*, to be the name of their idol; and others read the words, *one after another*, eagerly crowding to this hated worship; *eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse*; unclean and forbidden animals; and therefore they are *consumed together*: God, being privy to their works and thoughts, and seeing their utter apostasy from his worship and service, executes vengeance upon them. This relates either to the Jews, as some interpret it, many of whom might have brought back with them, and practised in secret, those idolatries which they had learnt in Babylon: or, as others, to the Antichristian church, in which idolatry shall revive, and Christ's ordinances be disregarded: or it may more generally refer to all the wicked who rebel against God. We have seen fire and sword terribly devour Jerusalem; with the same temporal judgments shall the seat of Antichrist be destroyed, Rev. xviii. 8. and we expect Jesus, the Judge of all, to be at last revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on all who know not God, and obey not his Gospel.

2: He will set up his kingdom in the world, to the great joy of his people, as he did at the first preaching of the Gospel, or as he will do more universally at last, when his name will be spread from pole to pole.

[1.] All nations shall hear the Gospel word, and be gathered in to Christ. *It shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues, and they shall come and see my glory*; the glory of Christ in his person and offices, or of his Gospel, in the great and precious promises of it; or of the church, into which they will be gathered, and where the members shall in purity of manners, beauty of order, and unity of affection, eminently adorn their profession, and glorify their Lord. *And I will set a sign among them*; an ensign, such as Christ is, lifted up in the Gospel word, to whom the gathering of the people will be; or some miraculous sign, as when on the day of Pentecost the Holy Ghost was poured out upon the apostles, and, to the astonishment of the different nations assembled at Jerusalem, they heard them speak all their several languages: and it is not improbable, that before the great day of the Lord's power, these miraculous gifts may be again restored.

[2.] Preachers shall for this purpose be sent forth. *I will send those that escape of them unto the nations*; either the apostles and converts of the Jews, who escaped the general impenitence of their countrymen, and went forth into every place preaching the Gospel; or, those who escape when the Antichristian powers shall be broken, and are as brands plucked out of the burning, will be enabled feelingly to preach the grace of a Redeemer, and the dreadful danger of sin: *to Tarshish, Pul and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, and to the isles afar off*. Concerning the countries here meant, interpreters are divided and uncertain; but the sense is clear, that they should go into all lands far and near, even to the most distant isles of the sea, preaching the Gospel to those *that have not heard my fame, nor seen my glory*; strangers to Christ and his word; and to whom his fame had never reached: *and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles*, the glory of the pardoning, sanctifying, comforting, and saving grace of the Redeemer.

[3.] The effect of their ministry in the conversion of the Gentiles would be great. *They shall bring all your brethren, the Gentiles, and all converts who have one father, for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations*; either the ministers

shall present them before the Lord, as the fruit of their labours; or they should offer up themselves, their bodies, souls, and spirits, as *living sacrifices*, Rom. xii. 1. *Upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts*, according to the condition and circumstances of the several converts; some rich, some poor, some weak, some strong; but all eager to come into the church of Christ; or these carriages may represent the Gospel ministers, by whom the souls of men are brought home to Christ; *to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord*, the place of general resort; *as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord*, so shall the Gentiles be presented to God in the beauty of holiness, their hearts purified by faith, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, as vessels of honour, and accepted as a well pleasing oblation, Rom. xv. 16. *Note*; (1.) They who are brethren in Christ, must love as brethren. (2.) The most acceptable offering is the sinner's heart; for this shall *please the Lord better than a bullock that hath horns and hoofs*.

[4.] God will appoint the ministers of this sanctuary out of these Gentile converts. *I will also take of them for priests, and for Levites, saith the Lord*. Though the Aaronical priesthood is destroyed, God reserves this prerogative to himself, to appoint his own ambassadors; and no man who is not called of God has any right to minister, no ordination of man being able to make those ministers of God, who are not first inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take this office upon them. Let those who dare make that profession in order to intrude into the sacred office, while conscious of their utter unacquaintedness with any inward call, tremble at the complicated guilt which they incur, by lying not only against their own consciences, but against the Holy Ghost.

[5.] There shall be a succession of such Gospel ministers to the end of time. *For as the new heavens, and the new earth which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord*; the Gospel dispensation, which succeeded the Mosaical, wherein all things are become new, a new covenant established, new institutions made, new commandments given, and these to abide for ever; *so shall your seed and your name remain*; a spiritual seed, both of ministers and people, who shall have a name in the earth, and in whom the church will be maintained and preserved against all the powers of darkness.

3. The solemn, frequent, and constant returns of worship in the Gospel church, are described in terms borrowed from the Jewish dispensation. Their new moons, indeed, and sabbaths are abolished; but in their stead the Lord's day is appointed for the religious assemblies of Christians for prayer, the preaching of the word, and joining in the Lord's Supper; and all true believers are careful to maintain and keep up these stated opportunities of worship, *not forsaking the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is*.

Lastly, They shall with joy behold the Redeemer's triumphs in the final and eternal destruction of his enemies and theirs. *They shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me*; either of the Jews who should be massacred by the Roman sword, whom the Christians would see lying unburied on the earth; or of the Antichristian powers overthrown and destroyed, Rev. xix. 19—21. *By the word of God*: or at the resurrection

day, the saints of God going forth from their graves, shall see the wicked, loathsome and abhorred as putrid carcases, cast into the everlasting burnings of hell: *for their worm shall not die*; eternal horrors gnawing incessantly their guilty consciences; *neither shall their fire be quenched*; consuming, yet unconsumed; cursed with immortality amid the unutterable tortures of those raging flames, no death, though courted, shall come to their release; but, tormented day and night for ever, they shall have no rest: *and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh*; the saints of God beholding them with abhorrence, and applauding the justice of God

in their damnation. *Note*; (1.) Let sinners hear and fear; sin will certainly receive its wages at the last; and it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of that God who is a consuming fire. (2.) In eternity, God will be magnified for his judgments executed on the wicked, as well as for his grace manifested to the faithful; and they who join the songs of angels in celebrating redeeming mercy, will find matter for their praises also even in the miseries of the damned: for when *the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever, the saints of God will cry Allelujab!* Rev. xix. 2, 3.

THE END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.











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