

THE
PULPIT COMMENTARY,

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THE BOOK OF JOEL.

INTRODUCTION.

§ I. SUBJECT OF THE BOOK.

THE prophecy of Joel is concerned with a natural calamity which had befallen his country, and from which, as his text, he educes a call to repentance, seeing in it the harbinger of the great day of judgment. Upon their repentance the people are promised present safety and blessing, and a future outpouring of the Spirit, not confined to them only, accompanied with a judgment on heathen nations, after which shall ensue an era of holiness and peace. This is the subject-matter of the book, stated generally.

The details are equally simple. The prophecy is usually divided into two parts, consisting respectively of ch. i.—ii. 17, and ch. ii. 18 to the end. These parts are, however, closely united, the latter growing naturally out of the former, and both forming one connected whole, representing chastisement, repentance, pardon, blessing, outpouring of the Spirit, punishment of enemies, final establishment of the kingdom of God. The book may be analyzed as follows: The prophet begins by calling attention to a terrible invasion of locusts, hitherto unparalleled in the land, which has cut off the vine and the fig tree, and all the fruits of the ground, so that there is left no material for offering and libation. For this he calls on Judah to weep “like a virgin girded with sackcloth” (ch. i. 8); the husbandman and the vinedresser must mourn over their stricken harvest, and the priests are themselves to lament, and to proclaim a fast and a solemn supplication for all the people. In this visitation is an omen of something greater, more terrible —“the day of the Lord” (ch. i. 15). This plague of locusts, accompanied by a long-continued drought, which destroyed all fodder for cattle and all hope of another harvest, was the harbinger of a severer judgment (ch. i. 16—20). For these ills the only remedy is true and immediate repentance. Before he dilates on this subject, the prophet again depicts the onslaught of the locusts and the fearful results of their devastations (ch. ii. 2—11); and then he bids the priests sound their trumpets and summon the people to

fasting, mourning, and prayer, that they may avert the wrath of God and prepare for the day of judgment (ch. ii. 12—17).

The prophet's appeal was not ineffectual: priests and people fasted, mourned, and prayed, and the Lord accepted their repentance; so the second part of the book commences with the statement, "Then was the Lord jealous for his land, and had pity on his people" (ch. ii. 18). He promises the removal of the scourge and the return of plenty, so that the heathen might no longer have cause to deride them (vers. 19, 20). Land and beasts and men may now rejoice; abundant rain shall fall, and the crops shall be rich; and barn and vat shall be full to overflowing; and, inspired by gratitude, the people shall praise the Lord, the Giver of all good (vers. 21—27). Then, some day, they shall receive large spiritual blessings; there shall be an effusion of the Spirit upon all flesh, which shall be attended by wonders in heaven and earth—a source of terror to the enemies of piety, but the deliverance and glorification of the Church of God (vers. 28—32). In those days shall be the judgment of the nations according to the attitude they have assumed towards Israel, according as they have yielded themselves unto, or resisted, the Spirit poured forth. The prophet mentions, as types of hostile nations, certain neighbouring peoples who have vexed and cruelly treated the Jews, and denounces on them just retribution (ch. iii. 1—8). He calls on all who love goodness to engage in a holy war against the enemies of God; he cries to God himself to send his mighty ones forth for the final contest of good and evil; he sees the countless multitudes that throng the place of judgment, and the Lord himself coming in awful majesty to utter the final sentence and to be the Refuge of his people, who alone shall dwell in the new Jerusalem (vers. 9—17). The land shall overflow with Divine blessing, fertilizing the very valley of Shittim, the most unpromising spot; hostile powers shall be utterly overthrown; but Judah and Jerusalem shall abide for ever, and none shall evermore make them afraid (vers. 18—21).

Such is the argument of the prophecy. The question remains—Is this description of a plague of locusts to be taken as the narrative of a literal fact, or as a metaphorical representation of an invasion by a hostile army? It is supposed that the four kinds of locusts mentioned (ch. i. 4) adumbrate four enemies of the Jewish people, though all commentators are not agreed as to the particular nations intended. The earlier exegetes saw in them Tiglath-Pileser, Shalmaneser, Sennacherib, and Nebuchadnezzar; later critics find the Assyrians and Chaldeans, the Medes and Persians, the Macedonians, and the Romans; or, the Babylonian, Syro-Macedonian, Roman, and anti-Christian powers. Hengstenberg does not limit the metaphorical sense to any particular invaders, but refers it to all the enemies of the spiritual Israel in all ages of the world. We have no hesitation in asserting that the literal view is the correct one, though doubtless, under the actual visitation, other judgments and other truths are signified. The allegorical interpretation is maintained by great names, both ancient and modern,

and is supported by the following arguments. 1. The description is too terrible to be used of any mere plague of locusts. 2. Many of the details do not apply to the known habits of locusts, or to the devastation caused by them, but could be used only of the attacks of hostile armies. 3. The agents in this plague are alluded to as responsible. 4. The scourge comes from the north, whereas locusts are brought into Palestine from the south. 5. The time of an invasion of locusts could never be described as "the day of the Lord." In reply to all such allegations, it must be observed generally that, although we hold that the prophet is depicting a calamity which had happened literally and truly, nothing forbids us from allowing that he beheld therein a figure of future events, and in his description of the past mingled terms which are appropriate to what he foresaw. As all the prophets, Joel was carried beyond the immediate present, and spoke words which had a sense deeper than he knew, and which had yet, or which have yet, to find their fulfilment. It cannot be denied that the actual language describes a present, not a future, judgment. The prophet calls the people to repentance in the face of an existing plague; he bids the old men bear witness that the calamity is unprecedented; he narrates the matter with simple perfects; he states historically (ch. ii. 18, 19) the effect of the repentance which he had urged upon the people, and to which they had devoutly betaken themselves. There is here no prophetic use of a preterite in describing a future event; there is no mark of an allegory being intended; the prophet has before his eyes the infliction which he portrays in such fervent language; he calls on the people to fast and weep, not for a distant invasion of imaginary enemies, but to deprecate present ruin which was palpable and unmistakable. So much premised, we may briefly notice the arguments mentioned above, which are maintained by Hengstenberg, Pusey, and others.

1 and 2. The accounts of the effects produced by an invasion of locusts, which are given by modern travellers and naturalists, confirm in all points the picturesque description of Joel, and prove that it is not inaccurate or exaggerated. The following passage from Van-Lennep ('Bible Lands,' i. p. 314) disposes of most of the objections which have been offered to the prophet's language.

"The young locusts," he says, "rapidly attain the size of the common grasshopper, and proceed in one and the same direction, first crawling, and at a later period leaping, as they go, devouring every green thing that lies in their path. They advance more slowly than a devouring fire, but the ravages they commit are scarcely inferior or less to be dreaded. Fields of standing wheat and barley, vineyards, mulberry orchards, and groves of olive, fig, and other trees are in a few hours deprived of every green blade and leaf, the very bark being often destroyed. Their voracity is such that, in the neighbourhood of Broosa, in the year 1856, an infant, having been left asleep in its cradle under some shady trees, was found not long after partly devoured by the locusts. The ground over which their devas-

tating hordes have passed at once assumes an appearance of sterility and dearth. Well did the Romans call them 'the burners of the land,' which is the literal meaning of our word 'locust.' On they move, covering the ground so completely as to hide it from sight, and in such numbers that it often takes three or four days for the mighty host to pass by. When seen at a distance, this swarm of advancing locusts resembles a cloud of dust or sand, reaching a few feet above the ground, as the myriads of insects leap forward. The only thing that momentarily arrests their progress is a sudden change of weather; for the cold benumbs them while it lasts. They also keep quiet at night, swarming like bees on the bushes and hedges until the morning sun warms them and revives them and enables them to proceed on their devastating march. They 'have no king' nor leader, yet they falter not, but press on in serried ranks, urged in the same direction by an irresistible impulse, and turn neither to the right hand nor to the left for any sort of obstacle. When a wall or a house lies in their way, they climb straight up, going over the roof to the other side, and blindly rush in at the open doors and windows. When they come to water, be it a mere puddle or a river, a lake or the open sea, they never attempt to go round it, but unhesitatingly leap in and are drowned, and their dead bodies, floating on the surface, form a bridge for their companions to pass over. The scourge thus often comes to an end, but it as often happens that the decomposition of millions of insects produces pestilence and death. History records a remarkable instance which occurred in the year 125 before the Christian era. The insects were driven by the wind into the sea in such vast numbers that their bodies, being driven back by the tide upon the land, caused a stench which produced a fearful plague, whereby eighty thousand persons perished in Libya, Cyrene, and Egypt. The locust, however, soon acquires its wings, and proceeds on its way by flight, whenever a strong breeze favours its progress. Our attention has often been attracted by the sudden darkening of the sun in a summer sky, accompanied by the peculiar noise which a swarm of locusts always makes moving through the air, and, glancing upward, we have seen them passing like a cloud at a height of two or three hundred feet. Some of them are constantly dropping to the earth, and, after resting awhile, are driven by a common impulse to rise again and proceed with the wind, so that, besides the principal cloud, single locusts or a few together may be seen in almost any part of the sky. During a great flight, they sometimes drop so thickly upon the ground that it is impossible to step without treading upon some of them."

It will be seen from this extract that Joel's description is exact in every particular, though coloured by poetic fancy and enriched by ornamental diction. It is to be noted that in it no mention is made of injury to persons or buildings. If a hostile invasion were intended, this omission would not be found; the mischief would not be confined to cattle and vegetable productions. Many of the details of the locust-flight could only be applied to human enemies by a violent straining of metaphorical language or by

assuming that the prophet used incongruous accessories in order to complete his picture.

8. As to the morality of the agent, proof of which the objectors find in its being called (ch. i. 6) "a nation" (*gôl*), and being said to have "done great things" (ch. ii. 20), we may remark that the locusts are figuratively represented as an army invading a land, marshalled in due order, and acting in concert. So in Prov. xxx. 25, 26 the ants and the conies are called "a people" (*am*), and Homer ('*Iliad*, ii. 87) talks of "the nations of bees." In assigning, as the cause of their destruction, their exultation at the great ruin they had caused, Joel is using the language of poetry, and does not formally attribute responsibility to these irrational instruments of punishment. By the Mosaic Law, irrational creatures had to pay the penalty for injuries inflicted by them (Exod. xxi. 28, etc.), and it is no great effort of imagination to represent the locusts as boasting of their evil achievements, and suffering accordingly.

4. It is not true that this pest came only from the south. Any wind might bring it. Locusts are found in the Syrian desert above Galilee, and a north wind would spread them over Palestine; the same wind, continuing, would drive them into the wilderness of Arabia, "a land desolate and barren;" while, with a little variation of direction, part might be carried into the Dead Sea and part into the Mediterranean. If "the northerner," or "the northern army," could be taken to mean the Assyrians, because they usually attacked from that quarter, the rest of the description is wholly inapplicable. No Assyrian army was ever driven into the Arabian desert, with its van in the eastern sea and its rear in the western, and left to perish in the waters, tainting the air around.

5. The expression, "the day of the Lord," is not applied merely to the plague of locusts. The prophet speaks of it as "at hand," not as yet actually present. He sees in the existing calamity a token and a presage of a greater judgment, when all sin should be punished and all wrong righted—a foretaste of that fearful day of which Isaiah (ii. 12—17) speaks, to culminate some time in a final award given to all the world. Looking thus beyond the present affliction to what it portended and imaged, well might the prophet cry, "Alas for the day!" and mingle with the details of the scourge which lay upon the land the terrors that shall accompany the final consummation.

In Messianic prophecy we have generally to distinguish two ideas—the coming of Jehovah, and the coming of the Son of David. If we except the doubtful expression in ch. ii. 23, where for "the former rain" of the Authorized Version some render "a teacher of righteousness" (which translation does not suit the immediate context), we have in Joel no plain allusion to the personal Redeemer; but he is very copious on the advent of Jehovah and the day of the Lord. This theophany brings with it a large outpouring of grace and a display of avenging judgment. Both these aspects are represented in this prophecy. The promise of the plentiful effusion of the Holy Spirit was held by St. Peter (Acts ii.) to have been fulfilled on the day of Pentecost,

when the Holy Ghost came down to dwell in the Church, and his gracious influence was not confined to one nation or one class of people, but was poured alike on Jew and Gentile, and on the highest and humblest members of society. Doubtless there had been partial fulfilments of this prediction before St. Peter's time, as doubtless there have been further fulfilments since; but the accomplishment, which was to continue unto the end, began to be seen in larger measure then, and forcibly vindicated the apostle's notice. The appearance of Jehovah in judgment is described in awful terms, which are reproduced in our Saviour's delineation of the judgment-day and in the Apocalypse of St. John. All nations are assembled before the Lord; the great contest between good and evil is being decided; all nature sympathizes in the unimaginable strife; the struggle ends; the enemies of the Lord are wasted and consumed, while God's people are victorious and largely blessed, their holy influence spreads widely around, for the Lord dwells among them and fills them with his grace.

§ II. AUTHOR AND DATE.

"Joel the son of Pethuel" (in the Septuagint, "Bethuel")—that is all that we know for certain concerning this prophet; every other detail about him is inferential or conjectural. His name is explained by St. Jerome to mean "beginning," or "God is;" but is better interpreted "Jehovah is God." Other persons in Holy Scripture have borne the name, *e.g.* Samuel's eldest son, who did not walk in his good father's steps (1 Sam. viii. 2), a son of Josiah (1 Chron. iv. 35), one of David's warriors (1 Chron. xi. 38), and a Levite under the same king (1 Chron. xv. 7). Pseudo-Epiphanius, who, in his 'Lives of the Prophets,' gives many legendary stories concerning these personages, asserts (bk. ii. 245) that he was of the tribe of Reuben, and born at Bethom, or Bethhoron, identified with *Beit Ur*, a place ten miles north-west of Jerusalem. Here, too, he is said to have been buried. We know not the grounds on which this tradition rests. Equally insecure is the opinion held by many that he was a priest or Levite; the only argument in favour of the notion being that he often mentions the offerings and festivals of the temple service; while, on the other hand, he addresses the priests as a class to which he did not belong; "Ye priests . . . ye ministers," he says (ch. i. 13), and he calls upon them officially to proclaim the fast which he enjoined. We may affirm with tolerable certainty that he was a native of Judæa, and exercised his prophetic office in that quarter of the Holy Land, probably at Jerusalem. His mission was to Judah, as Hosea's had been to Israel. He exhorts the priests as though living among them (ch. i. 13, 14); he speaks of the sacrifices of the temple (ch. i. 9, 13); he addresses the inhabitants of Jerusalem (ch. ii. 23); it is Jerusalem which he sees surrounded and threatened (ch. ii. 9); the trumpet is to be sounded in Zion (ch. ii. 15); the house of the Lord is before his eyes (ch. i. 9); deliverance is to be in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem (ch. ii. 32); the

captivity of Judah is to be brought again (ch. iii. 1); the nations are to be chastised for their treatment of the Judæans (ch. iii. 2—8); the promised blessings are all destined for Zion (ch. iii. 20, 21). There is throughout the book no mention of Israel, no recognition of its separate existence. So it is evident that we have strong ground for affirming that the scene of Joel's prophecy was Jerusalem.

But when we come to inquire the date of our prophet, we are at once landed in a very difficult question. Joel himself tells us nothing definite concerning this matter. He does not, as so many of his brother-prophets do, say under what king or kings he prophesied; and we are left to gather our conclusions from internal evidence. How uncertain this is, and how likely to lead one astray, may be inferred from the widely differing results at which critics have arrived. Some consider Joel to be the earliest of all the prophets; others regard him as the latest, alleging that he composed his book after Nehemiah's reformation, and that the prophecy is only a concoction of earlier writings, especially of Ezekiel (see Merx, "Die Proph. des Joel"). St. Jerome asserts that he was a contemporary of Hosea, and tradition generally assigns him to the early part of that period. There seems no reason to doubt that Amos quotes Joel in Amos i. 2, when he says, "The Lord will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem;" for he brings in the sentence abruptly, and as if citing from some writing well known; whereas in Joel (ch. iii. 16) it occurs naturally as part of a whole paragraph in due connection with what precedes and follows. Also Amos concludes with promises of blessings very similar to those of Joel, and quite in the same strain (comp. Amos ix. 13 and ch. iii. 18). Other passages, too, seem to be reminiscences of the older prophet; e.g. Amos vii. 3 compared with ch. ii. 13; Amos vii. 4 with ch. i. 20. As Amos prophesied during the time that Uzziah and Jeroboam II. were contemporaneous, Joel must have lived earlier, before the beginning of Uzziah's reign, thus exercising his office previously to Hosea. Other facts lead apparently to the same conclusion. The only enemies mentioned in the book are the Phœnicians, Philistines, Edomites, and Egyptians; the author says nothing of invasions of Assyrians, Babylonians, or Syrians. It seems incredible that he should not have enumerated these among hostile nations, if he had prophesied after their attacks. The most serious Aramæan invasion of Judah occurred at the end of the reign of Joash, when "the host of Syria came up against him: and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people, and sent all the spoil of them unto the King of Damascus" (2 Kings xii. 7; 2 Chron. xxiv. 23). Had this great blow been struck lately, Joel could not have refrained from noticing it; he therefore lived before this catastrophe. Further, the sin of idolatry is nowhere mentioned, and the regular worship of Jehovah is everywhere presupposed. Under the three monarchs preceding Joash, idolatry was prevalent; and under Joash himself pure worship was lamentably degraded as soon as the reverent hand of Jehoiada the high

priest was withdrawn; so that it is concluded that Joel's prophecy must be set in the earlier part of Joash's reign, when the young king was under tutelage. This would account for his not being mentioned amongst the various classes whom the prophet summons to penitence, in ch. i. and ii. Plainly, also, the Assyrians had not yet endangered the peace of Judah. From the enumeration of the enemies too an argument is drawn. The Philistines and Edomites attacked Judæa in the days of Jehoram (2 Chron. xxi. 10, etc.), but they were not punished for their revolt till the times of Amaziah son of Joash, and Uziah his successor (2 Chron. xxv. 11; xxvi. 6). Therefore Joel's mission falls between the sin and its chastisement; i.e. between the reigns of Jehoram and Amaziah. The above arguments have seemed to many critics sufficient to fix the date of Joel's prophecy. But they may be pressed too far. Little importance must be attached to the prophet's silence concerning the Assyrians. He speaks (ch. iii. 2) of all the nations who are hostile to Judah, and, though he selects four for special mention, he does not by this exclude all others. And, in fact, it is certain that the Assyrians were a peril to all the dwellers in Palestine long before the period now under review. Balaam had spoken (Numb. xxiv. 22) of captivity at their hands; and the monuments show that Ahab had encountered them when he joined Benhadad of Damascus in his confederacy against Shalmaneser II., and was defeated with great loss on the Orontes. Jehu, too, who lived in the same time as Joash, paid tribute to the Assyrians (see Schrader, 'Die Keilinschr. und Alt. Test.,' p. 199). And as to the three nations named by Joel—the Philistines, Edomites, and Phœnicians—the same are denounced by Amos (i. 6—15), who lived later still; and therefore no definition of time can be derived from their mention by our prophet. They were at most only petty, vexatious enemies, whose plundering raids were not to be compared with the onset of great nations, such as the Assyrians and Chaldeans. Nothing certain can be inferred from the place of Joel in the Hebrew canon, which is not arranged in accurate chronological order. In the Septuagint, Joel stands fourth, being placed after Micah, who stands third; and, although the present order may be supported on traditional grounds, these will not bear the investigation of modern criticism.

We have seen that, if it be conceded that Amos quotes Joel, a limitation as to the date of the latter is at once afforded. Some late writers, e.g. Scholz and Merx, have assigned him to post-exilic times, and one indeed relegates him to the Maccabean period. Their arguments may be seen in Knabenbauer, pp. 189—194; they are very far from convincing, and are shattered by the fact (if it be fact) that Isaiah quotes Joel, or has him in mind when he writes certain passages. The paragraph in Isaiah (xiii. 6), "The day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty," is cited verbatim from Joel, including the alliteration in the original, and the remarkable use of the name *Shaddai*, "Almighty." In the same chapter of Isaiah there are other reminiscences of the earlier seer: as Isa. xiii. 10 compared with ch. ii. 10, 31, where the substance, if not the words, are

similar; Isa. xlii. 13 with ch. iii. 15, 16; Isa. xlii. 8 with ch. ii. 6. Other prophets must have made use of Joel, unless we consider him a wholesale plagiarist, who composed a cento from various writers, and claimed inspiration for a mere collection of extracts—an idea dishonouring and inconceivable. Thus Obadiah has many points of contact with Joel. Comp. Obad. 11, "cast lots upon Jerusalem," with ch. iii. 3; Obad. 10, "violence against thy brother Jacob," with ch. iii. 19; Obad. 15 with ch. i. 15, etc. So, again, Zechariah has many similarities of wording and meaning. This will appear at once on a comparison of ch. ii. 30—32 with Zech. xii. 2, 9; xiv. 1, 5—11. The internal indications of date being so far precarious, we must not omit anything that may help towards some conclusion. One such hint is found in the name, "the valley of Jehoshaphat" (ch. iii. 2), which is possibly a proof that Joel lived after that king, and, by the symbolical use of that locality, refers to some event that had happened there, and this can be nothing else than the defeat of the Moabites and their allies, narrated in 2 Chron. xx. 22, etc. This disposes of the theory of Bunsen ('Gott in der Gesch.' i. 321), that Joel prophesied soon after the schism of the ten tribes, when Jerusalem had been plundered by Shishak, in the middle of the tenth century B.C. This critic supports his position by a reference to the statement in ch. iii. 19, that Egypt and Edom shall be chastised for their violence against the children of Judah, the violence being the capture of Jerusalem by Shishak, in which event he supposes that the Edomites took part. And he deems that the punishment of this onslaught was effected when Asa defeated Zerah the Ethiopian at Mareshah (2 Chron. xiv. 9, etc.), and that, as this judgment is represented as future, Joel lived before Asa's time. But there is no proof whatever that the Edomites took part in Shishak's attack; nor were they punished at this time, as they ought to have been; nor would the defeat of the Ethiopian have been in Joel's eyes a judgment on the Egyptians. The unfavourable mention of the Philistines and Phœnicians is accounted for by their capture of Jerusalem in the reign of Jehoram (2 Chron. xxi. 16, 17).

It remains to notice the arguments of those critics who assign Joel to post-exilic times. They are thus summarized by a recent commentator (Knabenbauer). 1. The commonwealth is supposed to be so small that the sound of a trumpet blown in Zion would summon all the inhabitants to a solemn assembly; and that one invasion of locusts produced a dearth of corn and wine; and the authority was vested in the elders and priests; which state of things could be found only after the return. 2. A strict observation of the Law and of ceremonies is taken for granted; there is no idolatry; the people's sins are not censured; and no sincere conversion to God is urged, as in earlier prophecies. Such a condition suits no age before the Captivity. 3. In plain contrast to the prophets of preceding times, Joel confines himself to enjoining external acts of penitence; he is at one with the most prejudiced of Jews, and thinks that salvation belongs to

them alone. 4. His whole prophesy is derived from the writings of previous prophets. 5. There is no order or method in his book, because he merely compiled "an eschatological edifice" from the study of other authors, without any attempt at logical arrangement. How false and frivolous are most of these allegations is apparent from what has been already said, but they may be answered *seriatim*. 1. Nothing can be inferred from Joel's mention of the call of the trumpet, except that, being in Jerusalem, he summons the inhabitants to assemble. Besides, the summons may have extended much further; as in Lev. xxv. 9, the trumpet is bidden to sound "throughout all the land." The priests are described merely as ministers of the sanctuary, whose duty it was to take the lead in the offices of religion. No especial authority is attributed to the elders; they are simply bidden to join with the others; and the king is not mentioned, either because he was then a minor, or because his special interference was not necessary at this agricultural crisis. The calamity was accompanied with drought, and the devastation of the locusts would destroy the future crop, so that national scarcity might well be expected for some time to come. 2. The prophet is careful to bid the people not to be content with outward signs of penitence. "Rend your heart," he says (ch. ii. 13), "and not your garments, . . . turn to me with all your heart." The very exhortation to turn to God implies the leaving sins, whatever they are. No special mention of idolatry was needed at other times besides the post-exilian era; and there were earlier periods of reformation of religion in Judah, when the Law was carefully observed. 3. This is already partly answered by (2). The external acts enjoined are intended to express the fervour and reality of the repentance, with due regard to the position of the priests as intercessors for the people. Far from restricting God's blessing to the Jews alone, the prophet foretells the outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh, and proclaims that "whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be delivered" (ch. ii. 32). 4. Joel certainly founds himself upon the history and enactments and warnings of the Pentateuch; as God's revelations occur in orderly development, he would have been no true prophet if he had not done so. But he nowhere shows traces of deriving anything from Ezekiel, or Jeremiah, or Isaiah; rather, as we have seen above, and as we note further on, some of these writers probably made use of him. 5. We have already shown that the book is one whole, methodically arranged, and capable of logical distribution. We are, therefore, quite safe in refusing to assent to the theory of a post-exilian date for the prophecy of Joel.

No date that is given is without difficulties, nor is it allowable to dogmatize in a matter so uncertain; but on the whole it seems safest to assign to Joel a period antecedent to Amos, and, if we must fix the time more precisely, we may offer our adherence to the opinion which has the greatest weight of authority, that he exercised his ministry during the minority of King Joash, and aided Jehoiada in re-establishing and in maintaining the

pure worship of Jehovah in the southern kingdom. We may account for the indefiniteness of Joel's prediction by remembering that he is first of all comforting his people under a certain material calamity, and showing them how to avert and remedy it; and that, in his prophetic foresight seeing in this visitation a token of God's judgment, he gives a sketch of what was in store, leaving to other hands the details. This is just what might be expected from an early prophet, and is in exact concordance with the orderly development of revelation.

§ III. GENERAL CHARACTER.

All competent critics agree in assigning to Joel a very high rank among the Hebrew prophets, placing him but little below Isaiah and Habakkuk, who are confessedly first in sublimity and elevation of style. For vividness of description and picturesqueness of diction he is, perhaps, unequalled. It would be difficult to find passages surpassing in vigour or colouring the account of the invasion of the locust-army and the desolation wrought by it, and the gathering of all nations in the valley of judgment. As we read these verses we feel that we are in the presence of an accomplished poet, one who was a master in the art of language, and understood rhetorical effect. The style is pure and clear; the meaning is expressed simply and distinctly; there is no ambiguity, there are no dark riddles to solve. Brief as Joel is at times, expressing much in a very few words, he is always intelligible. Even where he uses only pairs of words to delineate his picture, he is not obscure. See, for instance, ch. i. 10, "The field is wasted, the ground mourns; the corn is wasted: the new wine is spoiled, the oil decays." What a scene of desolation! yet how briefly and forcibly depicted! We see it all; we want nothing more to present it to our eyes. He is very touching amid all his energy and awfulness. The tenderness of his nature shows itself in many an unexpected hint. He has a feeling for family affection when he bids the bridegroom go forth from his chamber and the bride from her closet, to come before the Lord in sorrow and penitence, or when he summons Israel to mourn like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth. He sympathizes with the very cattle in their sufferings from scarcity and drought; in the prospect of better times he cries to them, "Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field." Of the prevalent sins which have called down the judgment, he says little or nothing. This one important element in prophetic addresses is absent from Joel's utterances. He speaks of chastisement, of repentance, of pardon and reconciliation, of a grand future in store for his people; but he refrains from dwelling upon past misconduct; in the face of the present visitation he is gentle and merciful in rebuke and complaint. As for his language, it is pure and, as we may call it, classical. He sometimes introduces uncommon words (see ch. i. 16), but generally the diction is such as was used in the best ages of Hebrew composition, and has in many respects served as a model for

succeeding writers. The idea of a fountain flowing from the house of the Lord has been taken up and expanded by Zechariah (xiv. 8) and Ezekiel (xlvi. 1, etc.); our blessed Lord himself used Joel's imagery to adumbrate the terrors of the last day; the pouring forth of the Spirit is adopted by Ezekiel (xxxix. 29) and Peter (Acts x. 45) and Paul (Rom. v. 5); the army of locusts is seen in the Revelation of St. John (ix. 2, 3); the ripening of the harvest is found applied to Babylon by Jeremiah (li. 33); the wine-treading is used and amplified by Isaiah (lxiii. 1, etc.). To Joel first it was given to tell of that great day of the Lord which filled the thoughts of many, as seen in after time; to him among the prophets belongs the first statement of the strange truth that, though salvation should come to Zion and spread from thence to all the world, only a remnant of Israel should be saved (ch. ii. 32).

If, turning from the influence which Joel exercised on his successors, we ask what he had learned from his predecessors, we see at once that he has based himself on Moses. The plagues of locusts and drought, whose effects he so graphically depicts, are the very punishments which the Law denounced upon disobedience (Deut. xxviii. 23, 24, 38, 42); the scattering of Israel, and its captivity (ch. iii. 2, 3), are what Moses foretold in punishment of rebellion (Deut. xxviii. 49, 64, etc.). He too intimates the repentance and consequent restoration of the people (Deut. xxx.), which Joel rejoices to contemplate. It was in development of Moses' idea of the retribution which awaited the enemies of Israel that Joel beheld the final judgment, with all its terribleness. To people conversant with the language of the Pentateuch, and with the ideas contained therein, these and such like traits must have come home with startling applicability, and have proved that they were moving in the sphere of God's providence, and themselves bearing witness to the truths of inspiration.

§ IV. LITERATURE.

The chief commentators on Joel are these: Hugo a St. Victore, 'Annotationes,' G. Genebrard, with Chaldaic and Rabbinical annotations and versions (Paris: 1563); Tarnovius, 'Commentarius' (Rost.: 1627); Pocock, 'Works,' i. (Oxf.: 1691); Chandler, 'Paraphrase,' etc. (Lond.: 1735, 1741); Leusden, 'Joel explicatus' (Ultraj.: 1657); Baumgarten (Halle: 1756); Schurman, 'Scène prophétique' (Wesel: 1700, 1703); Von der Hardt (Helmstadt: 1708, 1720); Bauer (Wittemberg: 1741); Svanborg, 'Latine Versus' (Upsal: 1806); Holzhausen, 'Die Weissagung d. Proph. Joel' (Göttingen: 1829); Credner (Halle: 1831); Meier (Tübing.: 1841); Wünsche (Leipz.: 1874); Merx, 'Die Prophetie des Joel' (Halle: 1879); Scholz, 'Commentar zum Buche des Pr. J.' (Würzburg: 1885).

W. J. DEANE, M.A.

THE BOOK OF JOEL.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1.—The word of the Lord that came to Joel the son of Pethuel. The name *Joel* signifies "Jehovah is God," or "whose God is Jehovah." We read in Scripture of several of the same name, but the prophet is distinguished as "the son of Pethuel," a name signifying "the sincerity of God," or "godly simplicity." We are not certain of the exact period at which Joel prophesied, but he is generally believed to have been the earliest prophetic writer of the southern kingdom, and one of the earliest of the twelve minor prophets, while Jonah is generally thought to have been the earliest prophetic writer whose book has found a place in the sacred canon. It is at least certain that Joel preceded Amos, who begins his prophecy with a passage from Joel (comp. ch. iii. 16 with Amos i. 2), and borrows from Joel another towards the close (comp. ch. iii. 18 with Amos ix. 13). Besides, Joel speaks, in the second chapter, of the plague of locusts as yet future; while Amos, in the fourth chapter of his prophecy, refers to it as past. He likewise prophesied before Isaiah, who also borrows, in Isa. xiii. 6, a sentence which occurs in ch. i. 15.

Vers. 2—7.—These verses describe the invasion of the locusts, with an exhortation to reflect on and lament for the calamity.

Ver. 2.—Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers?

Ver. 3.—Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation. The prophet thus draws attention to the event which he is about to relate, or rather predict, as a calamity unknown in the memory of living men, unheard of in the days of their fathers, unparalleled in the past experience of their nation, and one affecting all the in-

JOEL.

habitants of the land. He challenges the old men whose memory went furthest back, and whose experience had been longest and largest, to confirm his statements; he calls on the inhabitants of the land to consider an event in which they were all concerned, and to recognize the hand of God in a disaster in which all would be involved. But, though the visitation with which they are threatened had had no precedent or parallel among the generation then present, or that which preceded it, or for many long years before, it was not to remain without memorial or record in the time to come. To this end the prophet commands his countrymen of Judah to relate it to their children, to their grandchildren, and even to their great-grandchildren. The expression reminds us of Virgil's—

"Yea, sons of sons, and those who shall from them be born."

It reads like a reminiscence of what is recorded of one of the plagues—the plague of locusts—in Egypt, of which we read in Exod. x. 6, "Which neither thy fathers, nor thy fathers' fathers have seen, since the day they were upon the earth unto this day;" while the direction to have it transmitted by tradition seems an echo of what we read in the second verse of the same chapter: "That thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt." Similarly, it is written in Ps. lxxviii. 5, 6, "He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children." The solemn manner in which the prophet draws attention to this by "Hear," "Give ear," and the earnestness with which he insists on the record of it being handed on from generation to genera-

tion, are intended to impress on the people the work of God in this visitation, its severity, the sin that caused it, and the call to repentance conveyed by it.

Ver. 4.—That which the palmer-worm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the canker-worm eaten; and that which the canker-worm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten. Some interpreters consider, and rightly, we think, that the prophet enumerates in this verse four different species of locusts. The common or general name is *arbeh*, from *rabhah*, to be many; the *gazam*, or palmer-worm, is the *gnawer*, or biter, from a root (*gazam*) which signifies “to gnaw, bite, or cut off;” the *yeleg*, or canker-worm, is the *licker*, from *yalaqlaqaq*, to lick, or lick off; the *chasil*, or caterpillar, is the devourer, from *chasal*, to cut off. Thus we have the locust, or multitudinous one, the *gnawer*, the *licker*, and the devourer, either as (1) four different species of locust; or (2) the *gnawer*, *licker*, and devourer are poetical epithets of the locust, or multitudinous one. These names do not denote the locust (1) at different stages, according to Credner. Nor (2) can we with propriety understand them allegorically, with Jerome, Cyril, and Theodoret, of the enemies of the Jews, whether (a) the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Chaldeans, (b) Medes and Persians, (c) Macedonians and successors of Alexander, especially Antiochus, and (d) the Romans; or the hostile kings, (a) Shalmaneser, (b) Nebuchadnezzar, (c) Antiochus, and (d) the Romans; or those other kings, (a) Tiglath-Pileser, (b) Shalmaneser, (c) Sennacherib, and (d) Nebuchadnezzar. The most celebrated Hebrew commentators understand the passage of locusts in the proper and literal sense. Thus Rashi says, “The palmer-worm locust, canker-worm, and caterpillar are species of locusts; and the prophet prophesies about them that they will come; and they came in those days, and they devoured all the fruit of the trees and every herb of the field.” Aben Ezra says, “This the prophet prophesied in reference to the locust which should come to destroy the land. In the days of Moses there was one kind of locust alone, but now, with the *arbeh*, there are the *gazam* and *yeleg* and *chasil*, and these three kinds are joined.” He also quotes Japhet as saying “that *gazam* is equivalent to *gozez*, cutting, and the *mem* is like *mem* in *chinmam reykam*; and *yeleg*, that which licks (*yilog*) with its tongue . . . and *chasil* of some signification (*yachsele-nenu*) as shall consume it.” In like manner Kimchi gives the derivation of the words as follows: “Some say that *gazam* is so called because it cuts (*gozez*) the increase; and *arbeh*, because it is numerous in species; and *yeleg*, because it licks and depastures by

licking the herb; and *chasil*, because it cuts the whole, from ‘And the locust shall consume it’ (Deut. xxviii. 38).” When, however, Kimchi distributes the comings of the locusts into four separate and successive years, we must reject his interpretation in that respect. He says, “What the *gazam* left in the first year, the locust ate in the second year; for the four kinds did not come in one year, but one after another in four years; and he says, ‘I will restore to you the years the locust hath eaten.’”

Ver. 5.—Three classes are called on to lament—the winebibbers, the husbandmen, and the priests. The verses before us (vers. 5—7) contain the prophet’s appeal to the drunkards. Their sin had not alarmed them; the danger with which their soul was imperilled had not aroused them; now, however, the heavy visitation that awaited them would affect them more vehemently, touching them more nearly. Deprived of the means of their favourite indulgence, they are urged to awake from their stupid slumber and perilous day-dream. They are summoned to weep, shedding silent but bitter tears, and howl, venting their sorrow and disappointment in loud and long lamentation: Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine! He backs this exhortation by a most cogent and unanswerable reason—because of the new wine; for it is cut off from your mouth. The word *asis* is explained by Kimchi thus: “Wine is called *asis*, and so every kind of drink that goes out (is pressed out) by bruising and treading is called *asis*, according to the meaning of the root *asay* in Mal. iii. 21.

Ver. 6.—For a nation is come up upon my land, strong and without number. The loss of the wine and of the sweet juice of the grape would be a source of genuine sorrow to the drinkers of wine; that loss would be occasioned by the destruction of the vines. In this and the following verse the prophet explains the instrumentality by which that destruction would be brought about. The prophet, fully identifying himself with his countrymen, speaking in their name and as their representative, says “my land.” Kimchi understands the suffix to “land,” like “my vine” and “my fig tree” in the next verse, as referring either to the prophet himself or to the people of the land; while some refer it to Jehovah, the great Proprietor, who had given the land to his people for their inheritance while they observed his covenant and obeyed his commandments. The locusts are called a *nation*, just as the “ants are a people not strong,” and the “conies are” said to be “but a feeble folk.” Kimchi says that “every collection of living things is called a nation (*goy*); accordingly the prophet applies ‘nation’ to the locust.” Nor does the word

"nation" thus applied support the allegorical sense any more than the Homeric—

"Even as go the swarms [literally *nations*] of closely thronging bees."

This army of locusts is characterized by the two qualities of strength and number. The preterite *קָלַל*, though past, really refers to the future, to express the certain occurrence of what is predicted; so with *עָלַי* in the following verse, of which Kimchi says, "The past is in place of the future;" and Aben Ezra more fully, "A thing that is decreed to take place is spoken of in the past." This army has peculiar weapons, yet nothing the less powerful. Whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek-teeth of a great lion; or, *lioness*. Different descriptive terms are applied to lions—the lion's whelp is *נָר*; the young lion, which, though young, is no longer a whelp, is *נָקֵר*; also the lion, from its *hoarseness* at a certain age, is called *שָׁרָר*; the lion, from its *cry*, is called by onomatopœia, *לָבִי*; the lion, from its *strength*, is called *לֵשׁ*; while the common name of a lion, derived probably from *אָרַר*, to pluck or tear, is *אֲרִיָּה*. Having compared the invading locusts to an army powerful and countless, the prophet proceeds to speak of the weapons wielded by these warlike and hostile invaders. They are their teeth. While the common name for locust respects their multitude, the other names are of the nature of epithets, and all, as we have seen, derived from the vigour and voracity, with which they use their teeth. Those teeth, so destructive, are compared to those of a lion and the molars or grinders of a great, stout, old lion or lioness, for the word has been translated in each of these ways.

Ver. 7.—He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree (margin, *laid my fig tree for a barking*): he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white. We have here a detailed description of the destruction and devastation caused by this locust-army in its invasion of the land of Judah. The most valuable and most valued production of that land, the vine and fig tree, are ruined. The vine is laid waste, so that the vineyard becomes a wilderness: (1) "he has barked the fig tree" (so Jerome, "*Ficum meum decorticavit*"); or rather, (2) "he has broken the branches." The word *רָפָה* denotes a fragment or something broken, branches broken off, and so the LXX., "hath utterly broken (*eis syngkasmōn*);" while (3) Aben Ezra explains it, "Like foam on the face of the water, in which there is nothing;" i.e. a thing of nought. The locusts, by gnawing, had stripped off the bark, or by their excessive

weight had broken off the branches. The next clause, which speaks of *making it clean bare*, is explained by the Chaldee of peeling off the bark, but that, according to the first rendering, has been already expressed. It is rather more than this—it is stripping off the leaves and fruits or flowers; the barked or broken branches and twigs of vine and fig tree are then cast away or down to the ground. And all that is left are the whitened branches from which the bark has been stripped off. The casting away or down to the earth may refer to the bark; thus Kimchi: "He removes the bark; and so Jonathan explains, 'He quite removes the bark and casts it away;' and the explanation is that he casts the bark to the earth when he eats the juicy parts between the bark and the wood; or the explanation may be that he eats the rind and casts the vine blossom to the earth, and, lo, it is bared." Some, again, understand it of what is uneatable, and others of the vine itself.

Vers. 8—13.—The consequence of such ruin and havoc is great and general lamentation. The drunkards were first called on in the preceding verses to mourn, for the distress came first and nearest to them. But now the priests, the Lord's ministers, mourn; things inanimate, by a touching personification, join in the lamentation—the land mourneth; the husbandmen that till the ground mourn.

Ver. 8.—Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth. 1. The verb here, which is an *ἀπαλ λυόμενον*, is (1) imperative feminine; the subject must, of course, correspond. That subject has been variously supplied: (a) the ground, according to Aben Ezra; (b) *naphshi*, my soul, i.e. the prophet's address to himself; (c) the daughter of Zion, or virgin daughter of Zion; but (d) the congregation or people of Judah, as suggested in the Chaldee, is the real subject. (2) The LXX. has *θρήνησον πρὸς με*, evidently combining two readings, or rather two punctuations, of the same word, viz. *ἐγώ*, to me, and *ἐγὼ*, lament. 2. The mourning is of the deepest, bitterest kind, like that of a virgin for the husband of her youth. It is either the case of a maiden betrothed to a youthful bridegroom, whom she sincerely loves, but he dies before they are married, and thus, instead of the wedding dress, she puts on the garment of mourning, the sackcloth of rough hair; or she has been married, and her husband, still in youth, is snatched away from her by death, and she is clothed in widow's weeds—in her case real weeds of woe, and outward tokens of sincere, not

simulated, sorrow. The expression reminds us of Isaiah's "wife of youth," and of the Homeric expression frequently translated "virgin or youthful spouse," though more correctly "wedded wife." Such is the lamentation to which the people of Judah are called.

Ver. 9.—The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the Lord; the priests, the Lord's ministers, mourn. While all the inhabitants of the land are called to lament, and have abundant cause for lamentation, different classes of society are specified, and the grounds of their sorrow particularized. 1. The meat offering and drink offering accompanied the morning and evening sacrifice, and that sacrifice, with its accompaniments, being an expression of gratitude to God by a daily presentation to him of the firstfruits of his own mercies, was a visible memorial of Jehovah's covenant with his people; while the fact of its being cut off implied the cessation or suspension of that covenant and the people's exclusion from the covenanted mercies of God. 2. But the ministering priests in particular had cause of mourning, indeed a twofold cause: (1) their occupation was gone when there were no materials at hand wherewith to minister; their office could no longer last, as they wanted the appointed means for the discharge of its prescribed functions; (2) their livelihood depended largely on those offerings in which they were allowed to have a share, but, when these ceased through failure of the means of supply, the support of the priests of necessity ceased also, or was so curtailed as to threaten the entire want of the means of subsistence.

Ver. 10.—The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth. This verse is closely connected with the preceding, for the failure of the meat offerings and drink offerings was owing to the devastation of the country and the destruction of its crops by the locust-plague. The field was laid waste by them, nor was it a field here and there, or a solitary district; it was the whole land without exception or exemption that had cause to grieve, "if aught inanimate e'er grieves." This is expressed by one of those paronomasias of which the Hebrews were so fond, thus, *shuddad sadheh, abhelah adhamah*, equivalent to "field fails, ground grieves;" or "field fruitless, land laments." The oblation, or meat offering, consisted of flour mingled with oil; the libation, or drink offering, consisted of wine. There were also firstfruits of corn and wine and oil; while all the produce of the land was titiable. Now, however, the corn was wasted and the oil languished; and therefore the meat offering had partially failed or

entirely ceased; the new wine was dried up, and therefore the drink offering must needs have been given up. The mention of corn and wine and oil in particular is owing to their connection with the temple service, for the firstfruits, tithes, oblations, and libations depended largely upon them.

Vers. 11, 12.—Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen. The verb from *בִּיֹשׁ* (formed from *יָבֹשׁ*), to be or feel ashamed, or turn pale with shame; *קָקַר* is "to blush or turn red with shame." It is written defectively, to distinguish it from *הִקָּשׁ*, which occurs in the tenth verse and again in the twelfth, and which is the Hiph. of *שָׁקַח*, to be parched or dried up. Their hope was disappointed through the destruction of their wheat and barley—their most serviceable and valuable cereals; while disappointment of hope causes shame; hence we read of a "hope that maketh not ashamed," because it never disappoints as empty hopes do. Howl, O ye vinedressers, for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished. The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth. There is a transposition here which is a species of the figure *chiasmus*, so called from the form of the Greek letter *chi* (χ). The husbandmen are put to shame on account of the destruction of the wheat and barley—the entire failure of their field crops and ruin of their harvest; while the vinedressers have reason to howl because of the loss of their vines and the languishing of their fig trees. The prophet, after particularizing the vine and fig tree, proceeds with the enumeration of other important fruit trees that had perished by the teeth of the locusts. The pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered. The pomegranate, though abundant in that region, had shared the fate of the fig and vine; even the palm tree, the date palm, though a vigorous tree and little subject to injury, having no juice in the leaves or fresh greenness in the rind, ceased to flourish; and the apple tree—the medicinal apple, as Virgil terms it—suffered in like manner. Nor was it the fruit trees only that were injured; the hardier forest or timber trees—all the trees of the field—shared in the calamity. Thus Jerome represents the prophet as asking, "Why should I speak of the corn, wine, oil, and barley? when even the fruits of the trees have been dried up, the fig trees have languished, with the pomegranate and palm and apple; and all trees, whether fruit-bearing or not, are consumed by the devastating locusts." Because joy is withered away from the sons of men. This clause is connected by "because" with "howl," the intermediate words being treated

parenthetically or passed over. Joy here is either (1) literal; while "withered" is figurative, and signifies "has ceased or been taken away;" or (2) "joy" is figurative, denoting the means of joy, and "withered" may then be understood literally. The *min*, from, is a pregnant construction, that is, "is withered from" being equivalent to "is withered and taken away from" the sons of men. Thus Kimchi: "*Because joy is withered—is withered*, as if he said, 'it has ceased because the products and the fruits are the joy of the sons of men,' and so Jonathan explains it, 'because joy has ceased;' or the meaning of 'withered' may be by way of figure."

Ver. 13.—*Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God.* The invitation, or rather exhortation, here is to something more than lamentation and mourning; for, however natural in the circumstances, affliction itself could not avert or remove the calamity. They are urged, therefore, to repentance as well as lamentation. They were to assume the outward signs of the inward grace: they were to gird themselves with sackcloth, the outward symbol of their inward sorrow; next they were to enter the temple or house of God; they were to spend the night there in the attitude and garb of mourners; night and day they were to bewail their sins with humble, penitent, and contrite hearts. The priests are the persons first addressed, and that not only because, in discharge of their priestly functions as ministers of Jehovah and ministering at the altar, they had been specially touched by the present distress; but also because of their official position they were to present an example to the people whose leaders they were and on whose behalf they ministered (comp. 1 Cor. ix. 13, "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?"). Kimchi gives a correct exposition of this verse: "*Gird*, that is to say, gird on sackcloth, and he explains afterwards, *pass the night in sackcloth*, because even by night ye shall not remove the sackcloth from off you; perhaps Jehovah will have mercy upon you. And he says, 'ministers of the altar,' and adds, 'ministers of my God,' because the ministry was as the altar to God; and he connects the ministry to God—to the altar, as wherein they minister to Jehovah." For the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God. This is the reason assigned for the urgent call to repentance; and it is much the same with that in the beginning of the ninth verse.

Vers. 14—20.—After urging the priests to lead the way in the matter, he proceeds to summon all classes of the people, and particularly the elders, to engage in penitence, fasting, and solemn supplications, in order to avert the calamities that were impending, or to escape from them if they had already begun.

Ver. 14.—*Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord your God, and cry unto the Lord.* The command is addressed to the priests as the representatives and rulers of the people in all matters of religion; they communicated to the people the commands of Jehovah. This verse directs attention to three things—the duty commanded; the persons called upon to discharge it; and the place of its performance. 1. The duty required was a fast and a solemn assembly; and the priests are strictly enjoined to see to it that both these shall be duly announced and rightly observed. The fast was abstinence from food in token of sorrow for sin; it was intended to be the external evidence of penitential sorrow for sin. The solemn assembly, or "day of restraint," as it stands in the margin, was a public meeting of the people for the purpose of solemn supplication that the Almighty might be entreated to deliver them from the sore calamity with which he had seen fit to visit them. It was a season during which they were restrained from all servile work, and attention given exclusively to humiliation and prayer. 2. The persons summoned for this purpose were the elders, those who were so both by age and office—the magistrates as examples to others, and as having been implicated in the sins from which they now suffered. With the word "elders" are joined all the inhabitants of the land—the whole of the people, poor and rich alike; all had had their share in the national sin, all were sharers in the national suffering, and it therefore behoved all to repent of their sins and seek the Lord. 3. The place of assembly was the house of the Lord; that is, the temple, or that portion of it called "the court of the Israelites." Nor were they to assemble there without an errand; the purpose of their assembling in that sacred place was to supplicate the Lord to alleviate their distress, or rather remove it altogether. They were directed to cry mightily to the Lord; to cry unto him with vehement earnestness and importunate perseverance till he would be pleased to send relief. The proclamation of a fast was a common expedient, to which people, Jewish and Gentile, according to their respective

light, resorted in the day of their difficulty and distress. We read of it on many occasions; for example, by King Jehoshaphat in prospect of a hostile attack by the allied armies of Moab, Ammon, and Edom; again in the reign of Jehoiakim; also by Ezra in the day of danger; and by the people of Nineveh in consequence of the preaching of Jonah.

Ver. 15.—*Alas for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.* Some understand these words as suggested by the prophet to the people, that they might use them in their solemn and sorrowful appeal to the Almighty. This is favoured by the Syriac, which adds, “and say,” as if the prophet prescribed to them the substance of their address. We prefer taking them as the prophet's own words, which he employs to justify the urgency of the appeal contained in the two preceding verses to the ministers of religion, the priests, to the magistrates, the elders, and to all the members of the community, even all the inhabitants of the land. The day referred to is the time of the judgment that was coming on the land through the locusts. The day of the Lord, first mentioned, it is said, by Joel, is the day when he inflicts judgments on sinners, as in the present instance; it may be a prelude of that judgment that brought ruin on their city, temple, and nation. It may be an emblem of that judgment that wound up their nation by the destruction of their capital, or even of the final judgment when God shall destroy impenitent sinners and deliver his saints. 3. This day of the Lord comes suddenly, secretly, and irresistibly; and, when it comes, it is a destruction from the Almighty, or, according to the Hebrew paronomasia, *kashod mishaddai*, equivalent to “ruin from the Resistless.” The day of God's anger against Judah is a prelude of that day when, as Judge of all, Jew and Gentile, he will take vengeance on his enemies. Joel's prophetic glance reached onward and forward, not only to the close of the Jewish, but to the conclusion of the Christian, dispensation.

Vers. 16—18.—These verses contain manifest proofs that the day of the Lord was coming, and coming as a destruction from the Almighty. *Is not the meat cut off before our eyes?* The food for daily sustenance, and the food for Divine service—the corn and wine and oil, as mentioned in ver. 10—had vanished while they beheld the process of destruction, but could not hinder it. “These locusts,” says Thomson, in “The Land and the Book,” “at once strip the vines of every leaf and cluster of grapes, and of every green twig. I also saw many large fig orchards ‘clean bare,’ not a leaf remaining; and, as

the bark of the fig tree is of a silvery whiteness, the whole orchards, thus rifled of their green veils, spread abroad their branches ‘made white’ in melancholy nakedness to the burning sun.” He then refers to the exclamation in ver. 15, and to that in the words before us, “Is not the meat cut off before our eyes?” and then proceeds, “This is most emphatically true. I saw under my own eye not only a large vineyard loaded with young grapes, but whole fields of corn, disappear as if by magic, and the hope of the husbandman vanish like smoke.” Yes, joy and gladness from the house of our God. Not only had the food necessary for the support of daily life perished—“The food of the sinners,” says Jerome, “perishes before their eyes, since the crops they looked for are snatched away from their hands, and the locust anticipates the reaper,”—but the offerings used in Divine worship had ceased. Owing to the destruction of the crops, the firstfruits, as a matter of course, failed; the thank offerings could not be procured. Consequently, the joy that usually accompanied the presentation of these and other offerings was also cut off. When the Hebrews of old brought their burnt offerings, sacrifices, tithes, heave offerings, vows, free-will offerings, and firstlings of herds and flocks, it was a joyful season, a time of rejoicing before the Lord, as we learn from Deut. xii. 7, “There ye shall eat before the Lord your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households.” All this joy and gladness, so graciously associated with the worship of Jehovah, were now things of the past. The seed (margin, *grains*) is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the corn is withered. This was a fearful aggravation of their calamity. Their present distress thus prolonged itself into the future, as there was no prospect of a crop in the following year to cheer them. The rotting of the seed that had been sown and carefully covered in the earth was occasioned by the drought. The visitation of locusts, as Stanley says, “came, like all such visitations, in the season of unusual drought—a drought which passed over the country like flames of fire.” The rotting of the seed, and the withering of the corn, if the mouldering seed germinated and put forth a blade at all, rendered barns useless, and granaries, or the larger storehouses, unnecessary. The barns were left to decay and tumble down; and the granaries were desolate, and so there was no further use for them. Several difficult expressions occur in this verse. *Prudoth* is from *parad*, to scatter about, or to sow broadcast, and hence signifies “scattered things,”—seed or grain sown. *Wzy* is to dry up, moulder, wither; and is

said of seeds that lose their germinating power. *Megraphoth* are clods of earth, the root being *garaph*, to wash away (Judg. v. 21); the noun, therefore, denotes a clod of earth rolled together by water and swept away. *Otsaroth* were the storehouses, but these were allowed to moulder away, as there was no reasonable prospect of a harvest or of grain to store in them. The *mam-m'gurah* or *m'gurah*, viz. the barns, had now become a useless appendage of the farmstead. How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate. The drought that preceded and accompanied the plague of locusts destroyed the pasture-grounds, and thus the herds of cattle were bewildered, being deprived of pasture and water; they were perplexed to know where to find food to satisfy the cravings of hunger, and water to quench their thirst; in their perplexity they sought both, but found neither. The flocks of sheep, too, that are more easily satisfied and accustomed to browse on grass shorter and sparser, were desolate for want of nourishment, or, as the word *ashem* may be translated, "expiate the sin of man," inasmuch as they suffered from its consequences. This also was true to the life, as Thomson assures us. After quoting this verse (18) he adds, "This is poetic, but true. A field over which this flood of desolation [the locusts] has rolled shows not a blade for even a goat to nip." What with the locusts devouring what appeared above ground, and the drought destroying the seeds sown under the surface, the havoc was complete; famine and distress afflicted both man and beast. In the progress of this visitation the cereals—corn, and wheat, and barley, and other grains—were ruined; the fruit trees—vine, and olive, and fig, and pomegranate, and apple, and palm—were destroyed. But not only were the herbs for the service of man eaten up, but the grass for the cattle perished. Stanley refers to it in the following eloquent words: "The purple vine, the green fig tree, the grey olive, the scarlet pomegranate, the golden corn, the waving palm, the fragrant citron, vanished before them; and the trunks and branches were left bare and white by their devouring teeth. What had been but a few moments before like the garden of Eden was turned into a desolate wilderness. The herds of cattle and flocks of sheep so dear to the shepherds of Judah, the husbandmen so dear to King Uzziah, were reduced to starvation. The flour and oil for the 'meat offerings' failed; even the temple lost its accustomed sacrifices." The remarks of Kimchi on some of the difficult or unusual words of this verse deserve attention. On *way* he observes, "It is equivalent in mean-

ing to *way*, for the *beth* and the *pe* belong to the same organ." In his note on *pruloth* he says, "They are the grains of seed that are under the earth; and he says another curse will be that the seed will be destroyed and rotten under the earth, and shall not bud; and what shall bud, the locusts shall eat it. Or the grains of seed shall rot because of the rains which do not descend upon them, for there shall also be in like manner a great drought [literally, 'restraint of rain'] in those years." On the *garner* (*otsaroth*) being laid desolate, and the *barns* (*mamm'guroth*) broken down, he observes on the former, "The *garner* for the produce are laid desolate, for there was nothing to bring into them, and, lo! they are laid desolate. In reference to the latter he says, 'He (the prophets) repeats the matter in different words; for *mamm'guroth* is the same as *otsaroth*, and so 'is the seed yet in the barn, *m'gurah*' (Hos. ii. 20), gives proof of this." And he accounts for their being broken down either "(1) because they brought nothing into them, or (2) they were broken down because they had no caretaker to repair them after the custom from year to year, and so they fell and were destroyed." Of the perplexity of the herds he gives the following explanation: "He speaks collectively (i.e. the verb is singular, agreeing with the noun), and afterwards individually (the verb being plural); *perplexed* has the meaning of confusion, as a man who is confused in his knowledge, and does not know what to do, and so they (the herds) are confused in the land," in other words, they wandered up and down, and knew not where to go for drink or pasture. He (Kimchi) adds, in his further explanation, "that the flocks of sheep sometimes find pasture where the oxen do not find it, because that they (sheep) go up upon the mountains and upon the hills—a thing which the oxen do not in general do."

Vers. 19, 20.—O Lord, to thee will I cry. In consideration of man and beast—creatures rational and irrational being subject to so much hardship and suffering—the prophet appeals in intense earnestness of spirit to God, and all the more so because of the encouragement of his own Word, as it is written, "Lord, thou preservest man and beast." For the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field. The fire and flame here referred to denote the fiery heat of the drought which burnt up the meadows and scorched the trees. Some seem to understand the terms literally, as applied to setting on fire the heath, or even the trees, in order to check the progress of the locusts or turn them aside by smoke and flame. This, however, is refuted by the following

verse, which mentions the rivers of water being dried up: The beasts of the field cry also unto thee: for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness. In like manner we read in Jer. xiv. 4—6, "Because the ground is chapt, for there was no rain in the earth, the ploughmen were ashamed, they covered their heads. Yea, the hind also calved in the field, and forsook it, because there was no grass. And the wild asses did stand in the high places, they snuffed up the wind like dragons; their eyes did fail, because

there was no grass." The various animals suffering from hunger and thirst express their distress in loud and lamentable, though inarticulate, cries. The Hebrew words which respectively denote the cries of the different animals are, according to Rashi, the following: צֶמֶד expresses the cry of deer; נָחַשׁ (also נָחַשׁ), to roar like lions; נָחַשׁ, to low as oxen; נָחַשׁ, to neigh like horses; צִפְצִיף (rather צִפְצִיף, fulfil), to twitter or chirp as birds. Further, the subject is plural, but the verb is singular, for the purpose of individualizing.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*The value of the Divine Word.* The prophet gives us no intimation of the time when he wrote, nor of the tribe to which he belonged, nor of the family of which he was a member; he merely mentions the name of his father, probably for sake of distinguishing himself from others of the same name. 1. He is mainly occupied with the solemnity of the message which he had received, and the source whence it came; nor yet does he inform us of the mode in which the message reached him—whether by an audible voice, or vision by day or dream by night. Information of this kind might gratify curiosity, but would not tend to edification. Certain he was that the word came from God, and he hastens to assure those whom he addressed of the same. 2. God speaks to us in many ways.

Vers. 2—4.—*A retrospect and a prospect.* The former was sufficiently gloomy, the latter might prove salutary in its tendency. The oldest are challenged to look back on the past and recall all the years that had been, and then say if they could find any parallel for the disasters of the calamitous time through which they had just passed or were passing. The prophet did not need to name or specify the calamity; somewhat indefinitely or abruptly he asks, "Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers?" He knew well that the thought then uppermost in every heart was the calamity that had pressed so sorely, or was probably still pressing upon them.

I. THE DUTY OF COMMEMORATION IS TAUGHT US HERE. Why should a tale so doleful be put upon record and transmitted to children and children's children, that is, grandchildren (for which there is no corresponding word in Hebrew), and onward still to great-grandchildren, and from them yet forward to another generation? We can easily understand why the memory of God's mercies should be kept up; but why keep a record of miseries so crushing and cruel? Obviously not for the purpose of distressing posterity. The object, there can be no reason to doubt, was to perpetuate a standing memorial of those great and grievous calamities, in order by such memorial to set up a solemn warning against the great and heinous sins that had entailed those calamities.

II. THE DESPICABLE THINGS THAT PROVIDENCE MAY MAKE THE MEANS OF DESTRUCTION. These locusts—"gnawer," "licker," "devourer"—whether different species of locusts, or different stages of their development, or merely poetical epithets rhetorically to characterize the destructive processes or modes of operation, were weak and mean instrumentalities by themselves and in their individual capacity.

Vers. 5—8.—*The lessons taught by this calamity.* The lessons which God intended to teach his people by the calamitous events here recorded are solemn as salutary. Among them may be reckoned the ends for which they were sent, the alarming extent of them, and the effects produced.

I. THE ENDS OF THE CRUSHING CALAMITY THEN PRESSING ON THE PEOPLE OF JUDAH. 1. It was designed to rouse them out of their sinful slumber. Previous intimations of Divine displeasure had failed. Now God speaks to them in a way which they could no longer mistake or withstand. 2. He had spoken to them by the word of his

prophets, now he speaks to them by the rod of his wrath. 3. The nature of their sufferings remind them of the nature of their sins, filling them with remorse, not so much, if at all, because of their sins, but because they are debarred the indulgence of those sins. Their regretfulness arises from their besetting sins becoming impossible to them.

II. THE EXTENT OF THE CALAMITY.

III. THE EFFECTS ARE PARTICULARIZED. The effects as here detailed prove the extremity of the distress. Every green thing perished before this terrible locust army of invasion; every succulent herb was devoured by them; then the trees were attacked—their fruitage, their sheltering leafage, their branches, their bark. No wonder they are again called on, both in their individual and national capacity, to mourn, and lamentation behoved to be of the most sincere and sorrowful kind. When God's judgments are abroad in the earth men learn righteousness.

Vers. 9—13.—*The calamity has fallen upon all, and therefore the wail of woe proceeds from all.* All classes are summoned to this sorrowful work; no office in the state is exempt; things animate and inanimate; priests and people—the Lord's priests who ministered at the altar, and the people to whom they ministered; the whole land and the fields into which it was partitioned; the tillers of the soil and the dressers of the vine.

I. POVERTY TENDS TO THE DECAY OF PIETY. As a rule neither the depth of penury nor the height of prosperity is favourable to religion; in the one case corroding cares, in the other worldly pleasures, interpose between the soul and God.

II. THE BLIGHT IS BROUGHT BY SIN. The blessing of God makes rich, the smile of God makes all things joyful.

III. THE UNCERTAINTY OF WORLDLY PLEASURES SHOULD LEAD MEN TO SEEK SPIRITUAL ENJOYMENT. On the kindly fruits of the earth rich and poor were, as they still are, alike dependent. While the rich could afford the finest of the wheat, and the poor had to content themselves with such bread as barley yielded, both alike derived their support from the bounteous earth. They had looked forward for their supply from the harvest of the earth as usual without any dread or apprehension. 1. The pleasantest period of the year became the most painful. 2. The joy of harvest may be withheld, and all joy of an earthly kind or from an earthly source may be withered from the sons of men; but there are spiritual joys which no accidents, as men call them, can touch. 3. The children of God are independent of worldly pleasures.

IV. DUTIES ENJOINED. In times of emergency the duties of humiliation, fasting, and prayer are properly enjoined, and should be rightly observed. 1. The persons that are called on to lead the way in discharging such duties are the ministers of religion; as sharers in the common calamity, as having had a share in the sins that occasioned it, above all because of their prominent position as teachers and guides of the people in sacred things, they are bound to take a principal and prominent part in public humiliation, penitence, and prayer. 2. The first duty at such times is confession of sin; to this duty they are to address themselves at once, girding themselves for it. 3. With this full confession of sin with the lips, there must be real contrition of heart; of this the outward sign and symbol, as usual, in the East was clothing the body in sackcloth. While contrition without confession is defective, confession without contrition is hypocritical. 4. Nor is this grief for sin confined to the daytime; it extends into the night-watches.

Vers. 14—20.—*Calamity removed.* I. THE DISCHARGE OF THE DUTIES ENJOINED IN A RIGHT WAY. After the prophet had summoned the ministers of religion to realize their responsibility and humble themselves under a due sense of sin—its sinfulness in God's sight—he further intimates its calamitous consequences to a country, to a community both in a temporal and spiritual sense; he then proceeds to point out the proper method of going about repentance and reform, urging the work with suitable motives. 1. There was to be a fast in all the homesteads of Judah, and by all the people of the land, with due *preparation* for its observance. "Sanctify ye a fast." 2. Then a *proclamation* of a solemn assembly was to follow. 3. The persons to be

convened are specified. They were the public office-bearers and persons of influence, and along with them the whole people—high and low, rich and poor, young and old, alike. Thus a very promiscuous multitude, consisting of the whole body of the people with their rulers, was summoned to this great convocation. 4. The place of meeting was the house of God; for if we would worship God acceptably, we must follow the method he has prescribed. 5. And when all this preparation had been duly made—the proclamation made, the persons assembled, the place of convocation thronged—there was prayer, solemn, public, earnest, energizing prayer, to be engaged in—a simultaneous uplifting of heart and voice to the Lord, a crying unto the Lord their God.

II. CERTAIN WEIGHTY MOTIVES ARE ADDED.

APPLICATION. 1. We see in all this the sad effects and ruinous consequences of sin. Under its blighting influence the fairest spot on earth becomes a wilderness, the most fruitful land becomes a desert, and the richest region is turned into a barren waste by the iniquity of them that dwell therein. 2. The only way of relief is by returning to God. "Whither should we go with our cries but to him from whom the judgment we dread comes? There is no flying from him but by flying to him; no escaping from the Almighty but by making our submission and supplication to the Almighty; this is taking hold on his strength that we may make peace." 3. The prophet stimulates those that are backward to engage in this duty by his own example. "O Lord," he says, "to thee will I cry;" as though he said, "As for others, let them do what they please; as for myself, I will do that which conscience and God's own Word tell me to be the right thing to do, and the right as well as only safe course to take." 4. Our dependence on God both for daily bread and spiritual nourishment.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 2, 3.—*Tradition.* The generations of mankind succeed one another upon the face of the earth; but they are not disconnected, isolated, independent. Each receives from those who have gone before, and communicates to those who shall come after. Hence the continuity of human history; hence the life of humanity.

I. TRADITION ALONE IS AN INSUFFICIENT BASIS FOR RELIGION. It is well known that oral tradition is liable to corruption. Inaccuracy creeps in, and the truth is distorted, by the weakness of memory, the liveliness of imagination, the power of prejudice. Hence the importance of a "book-revelation," which has been often but unjustly reviled. The Scriptures are a standard by which correctness of belief may be tested, by which ignorance may be instructed, and errors avoided. There were traditions in the apostolic age which originated in misunderstanding, and which were corrected by the evangelists.

II. TRADITION HAS, HOWEVER, A VALUABLE PLACE IN RELIGION. 1. Memories of Divine goodness and interposition are thus preserved. The Passover may be adduced as an example. The children of a Hebrew family asked, when partaking of the Paschal meal, "What mean ye by this feast?" and an opportunity was thus given for the father to relate the story of Israel's emancipation from the bondage of Egypt. 2. Instances of Divine displeasure and wrath following upon human sin were thus handed down. Joel alluded especially in this passage to such purposes as these; Calamities came upon the land; the people were sorely chastened; and the prophet enjoins upon the old to communicate to their posterity—to their children's children—the awful events by which Jehovah signalized his indignation with national unfaithfulness and disobedience. 3. Piety was thus promoted. One generation would learn from another what are the Divine laws, what the principles and methods of the Divine government. In this manner the fear of the Lord, and confidence in his faithfulness, would evidently be promoted and perpetuated.—T.

Ver. 5.—*"Awake!"* This solemn appeal to those who are designated and denounced as drunkards is fraught with implicit lessons of wisdom and faithfulness for all devout readers of God's Word.

I. IT IMPLIES THE PREVALENCE OF SPIRITUAL SLUMBER. Such is the state of those who are immersed in the cares and enjoyments of this earthly life, who are deaf to

the thunder of the Law and to the promises of the gospel, who are blind to the visions of judgment or of grace that are passing before their closed eyes.

II. IT DENOUNCES SPIRITUAL SLUMBER AS SIN AND FOLLY. The body needs sleep and repose; but the soul should never be insensible and indifferent to Divine and eternal realities. Such a state is one of indifference to the presence and to the revelation of him who has the first claim upon the hearts he has framed. Slumber such as this is fast deepening into death.

III. IT CALLS FOR REPENTANCE AND NEWNESS OF LIFE. There is implied a power to respond to the Divine summons. And certainly the first thing for the sinner to do is to shake off sloth and indifference, to look about him, to listen to the voice that speaks from heaven, to catch the welcome accents of the gospel, which is the message of God to the souls of men. Blessed be God, this is the appeal: "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!"—T.

Ver. 9.—*Religious privations.* The old covenant was one especially characterized by human ministrations and external observances and solemnities. Apart from priests and sacrifices its purposes could not have been accomplished, and its witness to the world would have been unintelligible and vain. No wonder that to the Hebrew mind no prospect was more terrible than the cessation of public worship, of public offerings, of sacerdotal services. In the spiritual economy under which we live, the case is somewhat different. Yet no enlightened mind can contemplate without concern, without dismay, a state of society in which religious offices should be suppressed and religious ministrations silenced.

I. THE SUSPENSION OF THE OFFICES OF RELIGION WOULD INVOLVE THE SUSPENSION OF THE PUBLIC COMMUNICATION OF GOD'S WILL TO MAN.

II. IT WOULD INVOLVE THE DISCONTINUANCE OF HUMAN FELLOWSHIP IN THE LOFTIEST RELATIONS AND THE MOST BENEFICIAL EXERCISES.

III. IT WOULD INVOLVE THE CESSATION OF A UNITED AND PUBLIC PRESENTATION OF THE SACRIFICES DUE FROM MAN TO GOD.—T.

Ver. 12.—*The withering of joy.* The description given by the prophet of the devastation and misery caused by the horrible plague of locusts is so graphic and so frightful, that the very strong language in which the effect produced upon the inhabitants of the land is portrayed cannot be deemed exaggerated. The husbandmen are covered with shame, and joy is withered in all hearts.

I. JOY IS NATURAL TO MAN, AND IS THE APPOINTMENT OF A BENEVOLENT CREATOR. It is occasioned by the plentiful produce of the earth, by the possession of health and by circumstances of comfort, by the solace of human affection. Joy is a motive to activity, and diffuses itself from heart to heart, and raises the tone of society. A joyless life man was not designed to lead.

II. THE VISITATION OF CALAMITY MAY WITHER JOY. It is a plant of great beauty, but also of great delicacy. Exposed to the fierce winds of adversity, this fair plant withers and decays. Such is the constitution of the world, and such the changeableness of life, that this event does sometimes occur, as in the circumstances described in this passage by the Prophet Joel.

III. EVEN THE WITHERING OF JOY MAY BE SANCTIFIED AND OVERRULED FOR GOOD BY TRUE RELIGION. It may lead the afflicted to seek consolation and happiness in a higher than any earthly source. Especially does the gospel of Christ, by revealing unto us as our Saviour "a Man of sorrows," teach us that there are joys of benevolence and self-sacrifice which are preferable to all delights of sense, to all enrichments of worldly prosperity.—T.

Ver. 14.—*A fast.* The afflictions which befell Judah are represented as producing a deep impression upon the whole nation, and as justifying the calling of a general fast.

I. THOSE WHO FAST. This is an exercise which cannot be performed vicariously. 1. All the inhabitants of the land take part in it. 2. The elders of the people, as representatives and leaders, are especially summoned to attend.

II. THE TOKENS OF FASTING. More abstinence from food or from delicacies is not religious fasting. Humiliation and contrition are the essentials. Yet these may express

themselves in renunciation of ordinary pursuits, refusal of ordinary pleasures, the assumption of mourning garments, the refusal of wonted repose and comfort.

III. THE RELIGIOUS ASPECTS OF FASTING. There must be acknowledgment of sin before God, with confession and contrition. The Lord's house must be sought. The confession must be general and public. The cry of prayer must be heard in the sanctuary. Such a fast will not be observed in vain. It will prepare the way for the day of reconciliation, and for the feast of gladness.—T.

Ver. 15.—*"The day of the Lord."* This phrase is peculiarly Joel's, and it is apparently used by him in different senses. Of these we notice three.

I. THE DAY OF THE LORD IS A DAY OF CALAMITY AND RETRIBUTION. This is plain from its further designation as a day of destruction, and from the prefatory exclamation "Alas!" with which it is introduced. Superstition, no doubt, has often misinterpreted the calamities of human life; yet it would be insensibility and spiritual blindness not to recognize the presence of God in the day of adversity. Such a day is the Lord's, as reminding us of the Lord's Kingship over creation, and as summoning us to sincere repentance towards God.

II. THE DAY OF THE LORD IS A DAY OF JUDGMENT. The retribution of the present is an earnest of the day of recompense to all mankind, when the Judge of all shall summon all nations to his bar.

III. THE DAY OF THE LORD IS TO HIS PEOPLE THE DAY OF SPIRITUAL AND IMPERISHABLE BLESSING. So the Apostle Peter interprets the language of the Prophet Joel. The outpouring of spiritual blessing, the effecting of spiritual deliverance, the fulfilling of the purposes of infinite mercy, shall all come about in that promised and expected day.—T.

Vers. 17, 18.—*The desolation of the land.* Whether actually and literally by a plague of locusts, or by a hostile incursion such as a plague of this kind might well typify, Judah was overrun, afflicted, and cursed. The picture is one of unrelieved gloom and misery.

I. THE PUNITIVE JUDGMENTS OF GOD REACH MEN THROUGH THE CROPS OF THE FIELD, AND THE HERDS AND FLOCKS OF THE PASTURE. The necessities of life, the constituents of wealth, are in the hand of God. He rules not only in heaven but upon earth. It may be doubted whether we are at liberty confidently to attribute to Divine displeasure the sufferings which befall nations in the way of disaster and famine; but in this passage this interpretation is given upon prophetic authority.

II. SUCH JUDGMENTS ARE INTENDED TO SUMMON THOSE AFFLICTED WITH THEM TO CONTRITION AND REPENTANCE. It may be that only by some such means can the hard heart be broken, and brought to true humiliation and penitence.

III. SUCH JUDGMENTS SHOULD LEAD MEN TO SEEK THEIR HIGHEST GOOD, NOT IN PERISHABLE POSSESSIONS, BUT IN SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT. To many men poverty, losses, worldly ruin, have been the means of the highest happiness. Well is it if, losing the gifts, we find the Giver; losing the streams, we find the Fountain. The soul may learn to cry, "Thou art my Portion, O my God!"—T.

Vers. 19, 20.—*Trouble leads to prayer.* When Scripture depicts human misery and destitution, it does not leave the matter, as though there were nothing further to say. Always a way of escape is pointed out; always a gleam of light is let in upon the darkness; always a remedy is offered for the disease whose symptoms are described.

I. THE CRY TO WHICH TROUBLE LEADS IS A CRY OF CONFESSION. God has not afflicted the greatest sufferer beyond his deserts. The distressed soul gives utterance to the acknowledgment, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned."

II. THE CRY WHICH TROUBLE PROMPTS IS A CRY OF HELPLESSNESS. The soul may have called upon others, and in vain. There is no answer, no deliverance, when help is sought from man. Perhaps the soul addresses itself last to the Helper who should have been sought first, before all.

III. THE CRY WHICH TROUBLE PROMPTS IS A CRY OF FAITH. God has said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee." The promise is remembered, acted upon, and pleaded. Believing the Divine assurance, the afflicted lifts up his eyes unto the hills whence cometh help.

IV. THE CRY WHICH TROUBLE PROMPTS IS A CRY WHICH IS HEARD AND ANSWERED. God delights to hear the suppliant's entreaty, the sinner's confession, the earnest petition of interceding friends. Such cries come up into the ear of God. The sacrifice is accepted; the sin is forgiven; the grace is accorded; the chastisement is removed; the blessing is bestowed.—T.

Ver. 1.—*The life-work of an obscure prophet.* The literary style of this book deserves the consideration of every student of Scripture. With the exception of Isaiah and (as some think) of Habakkuk, Joel surpasses all his brethren in sublimity. His pictures of the disasters following upon sin are marvellously vivid, and his promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit was still living in the memory of the Jews when Peter, on the day of Pentecost, declared that its fulfilment had come. The first half of the book describes the Divine judgments which were at hand, and the second half (beginning with the eighteenth verse of ch. ii.) unfolds the promise of Divine favour. Its readers pass from darkness to light, from grief to joy, from estrangement to reconciliation; and in this book, as in experience, the transition hinges on the penitential prayer to which it was the prophet's mission to summon the people. We know scarcely more of Joel than the fact that he was the son of Pethuel. But the meaning of his name—"Jehovah is God"—was suggestive; for it was none other than the cry of the people on Carmel, when fire came down from heaven in answer to Elijah's prayer, and would therefore serve as a reminder to his auditors of their solemn acknowledgment of Jehovah's supremacy and claims.

I. THE PREPARATION WHICH JOEL RECEIVED FOR WORK is described in the single phrase, "The word of the Lord came to Joel." This was the one fact necessary to authenticate his message. If God was speaking through him, then—whoever he might be—the world was bound to listen to him; his word was a declaration from the Unseen. There is now a general forgetfulness of the possibility of such revelation. It is accepted by some as an axiom that the God who created the world and set it going cannot interfere further with his own handiwork; that if he exists at all, he lives at an infinite remove from mundane affairs, as did the god of Epicurus. If we speak of works done which cannot at present be accounted for by the laws we have deduced from observed ordinary phenomena, and urge that men have had glimpses of an outlying sphere of energy which surrounds what is visible, we are regarded as credulous enthusiasts. But in an earlier age there were men whom scientists would be the first to condemn, who, having never seen a comet blazing in the sky, nor heard of such a phenomenon, would have laughed to scorn its possibility. Yet the world now not only believes in the existence of comets, but has found out the law of their return, and has assigned them their own places in the planetary system with which once they appeared to have nothing in common. Is it not possible that the same process will take place in regard to what we now call supernatural? There are psychical phenomena still awaiting explanation which have convinced us that we have influence over each other, apart from physical contact; and if one human spirit can affect another, surely it is not incredible that the Father of spirits was able to touch the springs of thought and feeling in those ancient prophets. Indeed, this was not peculiar to them; it is an experience of to-day among the devout and prayerful, who obey the command of their Lord, "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light."

II. THE OBSCURITY OR WORK WITH WHICH JOEL WAS CONTENT. His was the spirit of John the Baptist, who was willing to remain only the "voice" of God. The world little thinks how much it owes to its silent workers in literature, in politics, and in religion. Many are living in quiet homes, or in poor lodgings, whose names are never heard, whose duties are not suspected, who by their pens are leading the nation in ways of righteousness. God's most faithful servants are sometimes personally obscure. Some are patiently plodding away at monotonous work, and bear in the spirit of their Master many an injustice and cruel slight. Others in business stretch out the helping hand to weaker brethren who, but for such timely aid, would sink in a vortex of ruin. And ministering angels still venture into haunts of vice to seek and to save those who are lost. The Father who seeth in secret will hereafter bestow some of the highest places in his kingdom on those who all their life long have been without honour or applause.

III. THE INFLUENCE OF JOEL'S WORK it would not be easy to over-estimate. Several of the later prophets were indebted to him for suggestive thoughts and phrases. Peter quotes his prophecy about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; and John, in his Book of the Revelation, makes use of his image of the locusts. It is thus that God builds the temple of truth. We see its stately proportions and exclaim, "Behold what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" but how often we forget the quarries from which the stones were dug, and the workmen who did the first rough work of shaping them for the Master's use! It is not so with God. We often admire the hero who, in advocacy of the truth, compels the world to listen; but the germs of his character may be traced to the nurture of a gentle mother, whose character and teaching, with God's blessing, made her son what he is. He is the living witness of the issues flowing from her obscure work.

IV. THE COURAGE AND HOPEFULNESS which Joel showed in his work. All was dark around him, and he knew things would be darker still before the sunshine came. He was living in a kingdom which, after the revolt of the ten tribes, was about equal in area to the county of Suffolk, and even with the addition of the district belonging to Benjamin was not so large as Yorkshire. Yet he boldly looks forward to a time when that kingdom would be the centre of light to the world. We talk of the "materialism of the old dispensation;" but here is faith in spiritual force which may put us all to shame. We ought not to be unduly discouraged by statistics which compare the numbers of Christians with the numbers of heathens. We should reflect that on the side of Christ are the leading nations of the world—not those falling into decay, but those which are planting the future empires which will rule the future. Yet, with all our thankfulness for this, our confidence must be not in it, but in him who can and will work through these peoples till all the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of our God.—A. R.

Ver. 14.—*Religious reformation.* In this chapter the prophet gives a graphic description of the devastation of the land of Judah by swarms of locusts. After eating all the green leaves and succulent parts of the trees, they destroyed even the bark (ver. 7), so that the effects of this awful visitation would last, not for a single season, but for years. God sent this pest, as he sends other troubles, in order to arouse the sensuous and careless people to thought and to contrition. The withdrawal of earthly blessings often tends to turn men's thoughts to those that are heavenly. Losses and griefs of every kind may bring a man or a nation to penitence, and this is one of their designs. But while this chapter primarily refers to a physical plague, any one who reads between the lines can see here suggestions of spiritual desolation, symbolized by the visitation of locusts. The vine was a well-known emblem of God's people, and as such was used by our Lord (John xv.); and the desolation of it, caused by locusts, fitly sets forth that condition of the Church which is brought about by its numberless enemies. When fruit-bearing has ceased, and life is enfeebled, and God's paradise becomes a wilderness, there is need for the penitential prayer called for in our text. Ecclesiastical history reveals to us periods when the Church seemed thus to lie under a curse; and in our own day there is enough of spiritual barrenness to call for heart-searching and earnest supplication. It only needs that God should send showers of blessing, and then even the wilderness shall rejoice and blossom like the rose. The subject suggested by our text is *religious reformation*, and some of its characteristics which are here hinted at demand consideration.

I. THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF GOD'S CLAIMS. The priests were to take the lead in this act of national repentance. Insensibility to the presence and the power of the Most High was being removed by signs and wonders which even the most carnally minded would understand. Now they were summoned to a true turning to him in prayer. They were not called upon merely to "appoint" a fast, but to "sanctify" a fast. In other words, they were to hallow their abstinence by an acknowledgment of God; they were to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. Fasting is never acceptable in itself, but only when it is employed as a sacrifice unto God. Depriving one's self of food or of pleasures may be practised for the good of one's health or for the sake of winning notoriety, and when it is so there is no moral or religious worth about it.

II. THE PRACTICE OF SELF-RESTRAINT. "Fasting" is a word which ought to have

given to it the widest signification. Generally used to denote abstinence from food, it may be as fairly applied to any refusal of indulgence to animal appetite, however innocent such indulgence, under other circumstances, may be. The keeping of a fast in mere deference to a social custom or to ecclesiastical ordinance is of no great value. But true fasting is inculcated by our Lord himself, though he personally refused to keep the ecclesiastical fasts of his own day. The restraint of appetite, the curbing of the animal nature, is essential to the doing of great works for him. Of the lunatic boy Jesus said to his disciples, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." This has its application to indulgence in strong drink. Total abstinence has a part to play as well as prayer in driving out the demon of drunkenness. Such fasting would do much to remove a curse which is as terrible as was the devastation of the land of Judah by locusts.

III. THE CULTIVATION OF RELIGIOUS FELLOWSHIP. The "solemn assembly" which was to be summoned was a religious gathering of the people. Their national unity was greatly fostered by the annual feasts, which brought the nation together in one place. The sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, was this—that he erected calves at Bethel and Dan, not only leading the people to idolatry, but breaking up their national unity. It was largely a political manœuvre on his part, for he could not have established a separate kingdom of Israel if all continued to go up to the same temple at Jerusalem. Under the Christian dispensation we are exhorted not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. When we meet for worship, the faith and prayer of one raise the faith and prayer of another. Separate embers die out, but gathered together they blaze. Public worship will be wonderfully revived in a real religious reformation.

IV. THE RECOGNITION OF SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY. "The elders" were to be summoned. Through them Moses first made his appeal to the enslaved Israelites. They were the witnesses of the first flowing of water from the rock. Their offerings represented the dedication of the whole congregation of the people. Longer experience and official status gave them privileges, with accompanying responsibilities. Leaders of men now in society, in literature, in political life, have peculiar responsibilities, and are summoned by true prophets to lead the people to repentance and to righteousness. The Elector Frederick understood this in Luther's day, but he needed a lowly born Luther to inspire him first. Here we may fairly appeal to the eldest in a family, to the captain of the school, to the leading merchants, to influential writers, etc., to be the first to return to the Lord, and henceforth to lead others in his service.

V. THE GENERAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF SIN. "All the inhabitants of the land" were called upon to repent. They could not serve God by proxy. The service of the elders and of the priests would not relieve them of responsibility. Each had to repent of his own sin and; for himself, return to the Lord. No better meeting-place can be found for all classes and conditions of men than the Church. There the rich and the poor meet together, remembering that the Lord is the Maker of them all. The recognition of the Divine Fatherhood must precede the realization of the human brotherhood.

VI. THE PRESENTATION OF EARNEST PRAYER. Those who "cry unto the Lord" are not satisfied with listless and formal petitions. Sobs and sighs are sometimes the sweetest music to the Hearer of prayer. These precede the blessedness of pardon in the history of each believer. The Church, too, must know what it is to present strong supplications, with crying and tears, and then she shall be endued with power from on high. The prayer of Pentecost must precede the benediction of Pentecost.—A. R.

Vers. 1—4.—*National calamity.* "The word of the Lord that came to Joel the son of Pethuel. Hear this," etc. These verses lead us to look upon some aspects of that terrible national calamity which was the great burden of the prophet's ministry. We learn from the passage—

I. THAT THIS CALAMITY WAS DIVINELY REVEALED AT FIRST TO THE MIND OF ONE MAN. "The word of the Lord that came to Joel the son of Pethuel." No one knew at first what a sad calamity was coming on the country but Jehovah himself. No sage, seer, or priest knew anything of it. The Eternal selects one man to whom to impart the intelligence, and that one man seems to have been so undistinguished and

obscure, that history takes scarcely any notice of him. Such a fact as this suggests : 1. *The distinguishing faculty of man.* Of all the creatures on earth, man alone can receive communications from heaven. Man alone can take in a "word" from the Lord. We know not how the word came unto him. The great Father of spirits has many ways of striking his thoughts into the souls of his children. Sometimes by awakening a train of suggestions, sometimes by articulate utterances, sometimes by dreams at night and visions in the day. He has divers ways. Souls are ever accessible to him. 2. *The manifest sovereignty of God.* Why did he select Joel more than any other man? There is no proof that he was greater or holier than many others in his country. No reason can be assigned for the selection but the grand reason that explains the creation of the universe. It was after the counsel of his own will—according to his good pleasure.

II. THAT THIS CALAMITY WAS UNPRECEDENTED IN HISTORY. "Hear ye this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers?" He means to say that such a disastrous event the oldest man amongst them had never seen, nor had they learnt from the histories of the past of anything equal to its terrific character. Terrible judgments had fallen on Judah before; but this, according to Joel, was the greatest of all. Observe: 1. *That no Divine judgments have been so great as to preclude the possibility of greater.* The penal resources of the righteous Judge are unbounded. The most tremendous thunderbolts that he has thrown upon the world are only as atoms compared with the massive mountains he might hurl. Great as your afflictions have been, they can be greater. 2. *That the greater the sins of a people, the greater the judgments to be expected.* It is probable that Judah's sins were greater at this time than they had ever been before, and that, consequently, severer penalties were to come. Eternal justice requires that the sufferings of individuals and communities should be in proportion to the number and aggravation of their sins. Take care, sinner; in every sin you commit you are treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath.

III. THAT THIS CALAMITY WAS SO TREMENDOUS AS TO COMMAND THE ATTENTION OF ALL GENERATIONS. "Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation." The terrible events of God's judicial providence have a bearing beyond the men in whose history they occur. Those that occur in one age and land demand the study of men in all ages and lands. They are not confined to individuals, they have a bearing on the race; not confined to men, they embrace humanity even to remotest times. Hence the importance of history. Truthful history is the Bible written by Providence to the world. But why should such an event as this be transmitted to posterity? 1. *Because it shows that God rules the world.* It is not controlled by chance or necessity; it is under the control of One who is not only All-mighty and All-wise, but All-just, who will not at all clear the guilty. 2. *Because it shows that God takes cognizance of the world's sin, and abhors it.* These facts will be of interest and importance to the generations that are unborn, even to the end of time.

IV. THAT THIS CALAMITY WAS INFLICTED BY THE MOST INSIGNIFICANT OF GOD'S CREATURES. "That which the palmer-worm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the canker-worm eaten; and that which the canker-worm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten." There is no authority for the opinion that the creatures here mentioned were symbols of hostile armies who were about to invade Judah.¹ The locust belongs to the genus of insects known amongst entomologists as gryllii, which include the different species, from the common grasshopper to the devouring locusts of the East. The creatures, therefore, mentioned in the verse seem to be from different species of locusts rather than from different kinds of insects. And the words may be paraphrased, "That which one swarm of locusts hath left, a second swarm hath eaten; and that which the second swarm hath left, a third swarm hath eaten; and that which the third left, a fourth swarm hath eaten." To punish sinners, God does not require to hurl thunderbolts from his throne, or flash lightnings, or despatch Gabriels from his heavens. No; he can make insects do it. He can kill

¹ For a description of these locusts, etc., see the Biblical Dictionaries, either Smith's, Fairbairn's, or Kitto's.

men by a moth. He can smite a nation by a gust of wind. He can perform his purposes by an army of locusts as easily as by a hierarchy of angels.—D. T.

Vers. 5.—A call to drunkards. “Awake, ye drunkards, and weep! and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine! for it is cut off from your mouth.” The words imply that the wine used in Judah was of an intoxicating character, that men in that country used it to an inebriating extent, and that such men should humble themselves in deep penitence on account of the great calamity that was coming upon the land. A more contemptible character, a more injurious member of the human family, exists not upon earth than a drunkard. Drunkenness is the chief curse of England to-day. Despite the earnest and praiseworthy efforts of temperance reformers, establishments for creating and supplying the intoxicating beverage are increasing in size and multiplying in number on all hands. The beer-house has become one of the most influential estates of the realm. A few years ago there were only three estates—the throne, Parliament, and the Church. Not long since journalism was added to the number, and now we must add the beer-house. This beer-house bids fair to control the House of Commons, sport with Cabinets, and even to govern the nation. The prophet here thunders in the ears of the drunkards of his country. Why should these drunkards now weep?

I. BECAUSE THEY WERE TO BE DEPRIVED OF THE BLESSING THEY PRIZED THE MOST. What does the drunkard value most? The intoxicating cup. For this he will sell his country, his self-respect, his health, his wife, his children, his all. By the intoxicating cup you can buy him over to any cause. But these drunkards in Judah were to lose that. Joel says, “For it is cut off from your mouth.” The locusts were to destroy the vine, and there would be no grapes, and therefore no wine. God will sooner or later take from every sinner that which he values most, that which he esteems his greatest pleasure or enjoyment. He will take power from the ambitious, wealth from the miser, pleasure from the voluptuary, the intoxicating cup from the drunkard.

II. BECAUSE THEY WERE TO LOSE THE BLESSING THEY HAD ABUSED. God will not have his gifts abused. He who abuses his blessings shall inevitably lose them. He dried up the vine now in Judah because men had abused it. And I am disposed to think it would be a blessed thing for England, ay, and a blessed thing for drunkards, were all the spirit-distilleries, all the breweries, all the beer-houses, dried up as this vine now was. I scarcely know which is the worse, the drunkard or the drunkard-makers.

CONCLUSION. “Awake, ye drunkards!” Awake from your sottish stupidity! Reflect upon what you are, and what a self-ruinous course you are pursuing. Awake! You are sleeping on the bosom of a volcanic hill about to burst and engulf you. “And weep.” Because of the blessings you have abused, because of the injuries you have inflicted upon your own natures as well as others; weep because of the sins you have committed against yourself, society, and God. “Howl, all ye drinkers of wine!” Ah! if you were aware of your true situation, you would howl indeed—howl out your soul in confession and prayer.

“O thou invisible spirit of wine,
If thou hast no name to be known by, let
Us call thee devil.”

(Shakespeare.)

D. T.

Vers. 19, 20.—The influence of national calamities on the minds of the good. “O Lord, to thee will I cry,” etc. In the verses extending from the sixth to the eighteenth, the prophet described with great vividness and force the attributes of these “locusts” and the terrible devastations they would effect, and he called upon various members of the community to attend to the calamity. The old men and the young people, the drunkards and the farmers, the priests and the laity, all are summoned to reflection, penitence, and reform. Here he cries out to the Lord himself on account of the calamity, which he describes with remarkable force. “The fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field.” It is a question whether the fire and flame are to be taken literally as burning the grass, which often

happens in extreme heat, or whether they are used figuratively. The reference, I think, is to the burning heat in drought which consumes the meadows, scorches the trees, and dries up the water-brooks. Our subject is the influence of *national calamities on the minds of the good*. The effect on Joel was to excite him to prayer, to compel him to lay the case before the Lord. Having called the attention of all classes of the community to the terrible judgments, he turns his soul in a devout supplication to Almighty God.

I. THIS WAS RIGHT. "In everything by prayer and supplication we should make known our wants to God." Prayer is right: 1. *God requires it*. "For all these things will I be inquired of;" "Ask, and ye shall receive," etc. 2. *Christ engaged in it*. He prayed, prayed often, prayed earnestly, prayed "without ceasing." He is our Example.

II. THIS WAS WISE. Who else could remove the calamity and restore the ruin? None. All men were utterly helpless. When all earthly resources fail, where else can we go but to him who originates all that is good, and controls all that is evil? True prayer is always wise, because (1) it seeks the highest good; (2) by the best means.

III. THIS WAS NATURAL. "The beasts of the field cry also unto thee." "The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God." "What better," says an old author, "are they than beasts, who never cry to God but for corn and wine, and complain of nothing but the wants of sense?"

CONCLUSION. It is well when our trials lead us in prayer to God. The greatest calamities are termed the greatest blessings when they act thus. Hail the tempests, if they drive our bark into the quiet haven of prayer.

"There's a power which man can wield,
When mortal aid is vain,
That eye, that arm, that love, to reach,
That listening ear to gain:
That power is prayer, which soars on high,
And feeds on bliss beyond the sky."

D. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER II.

VERS. 1-11.—These verses contain a further description of the calamity occasioned by the locusts and the appearance presented by them; the calling of a congregational meeting for penitence and prayer; the reason assigned in the coming of the day of the Lord.

VER. 1.—*Blow ye the trumpet* (margin, *cornet*) *in Zion, and sound an alarm* (or, *cause it to sound*) *in my holy mountain*. The *shophar*, or far-sounding horn, and probably the *chatsolah*, the *hazar* or silver trumpet, were called into requisition. The priests are urged with great vehemence, as *liq shophar* and *hariau* imply, to apprise the people that the day of Jehovah's terrible judgment was near at hand, and to prepare for it. This alarm was to be sounded from Zion, the dry or sunny hill, the holy mountain. The noun *gadash*, like *tsadik*, is applied to persons, therefore the noun *godshe* is used. It rose to an elevation of 2539 feet above the level of the Mediterranean Sea. It was the place of the ark in David's day, and so of the visible symbol of the Divine presence, and therefore the holy mountain,

though subsequently Moriah was chosen as the temple-hill. Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand. The effect here precedes the cause, as if what is uppermost in the heart comes first to the lips; while the abruptness may, perhaps, express the excitement and intensity of feeling. But how could the Lord's day be said to have come (*ba* is perfect), and yet to be near at hand? Hengstenberg replies that, in the intuition of the prophet, it had already come, though in reality it was only drawing near. Keil's solution of the difficulty is more satisfactory: every particular judgment that takes place in the history of God's kingdom is the day of the Lord, and yet only approaching as far as the complete fulfilment was concerned.

VER. 2.—*A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness*. It was, indeed, a day of Divine judgment, a day of sore distress. Besides the common terms for "darkness" and "cloud," there are two other terms, *חֹשֶׁךְ*, thick and dense darkness, such as ensues after sunset; the root *עָמַם*, though not used in the Hebrew, is cognate with the Arabic *afala*, properly,

to "set as the sun;" compare *naphal*, *nabhal*, *abhal*; while גָּעַל is blended from the trilaterals גֶּעַר, a cloud, and אָל, to be dark (compare *δρῶς* and *δρῶς*), darkness of clouds, thick clouds. (1) Some understand this darkness literally, as in the description of the plague of locusts in Egypt it is written, "They covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened." (2) Others understand it figuratively, as light denotes prosperity, and darkness adversity. Thus Kimchi says, "Affliction is likened to darkness, as joy is likened to light." At the same time, he mentions the literal exposition: "Or," he says, "through the multitude of the locusts the land is darkened;" and refers to Exod. x. 15, "For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened." **As the morning spread upon the mountains.**

(1) Some explain this of the locust-army stretching far like the morning light, as it breaks over the hills. Thus Pococke, "If *shachar* be rendered, as most generally, the morning, and the light thereof meant, then the meaning thereof seems to express the sudden coming and the widespreading of the thing spoken of, so as not to be hindered, in that resembling the morning light, which in a moment discovers itself on the tops of the mountains (on which it first appeareth), though at never so great a distance one from another." The wide and quick *diffusion of this plague*, like that of the morning light, is the thing meant. But (2) Keil understands *shachar* of the yellow light which proceeds from swarms of locusts as they approach, and translates, "Like morning dawn spread over the mountains is it" (i.e. the *glimmer* on their wings). "The prophet's meaning," he adds, "is evident enough from what follows. He clearly refers to the bright glimmer, or splendour, which is seen in the sky as a swarm of locusts approaches, from the reflection of the sun's rays from their wings." Thus the subject is neither *yom* nor *'am*, which the Vulgate, contrary to the accents, joins to it. (3) Others, again, connect the expression closely with the "darkness" preceding, and translate, "Like the morning twilight spread upon the mountains," that is, before it descends into the valleys. Rather, as Wünscho, "Like the *gray* of the morning," etc. (comp. Exod. x. 15 and שָׁחַד and שִׁחַר). Exposition (1) is confirmed by Rashi, who says, "The locusts and the palmer-worms are spread over the mountains, as the morning dawn is spread through (in) all the world." Similarly Aben Ezra, "Like the dawn which is diffused in an instant." Kimchi's comment is fuller, but to the same effect: "As the morning dawn

which is spread over the mountains as in an instant, for there is called the beginning of the sun in his going forth, because of their height; so then the locusts are spread and extended over the land in an instant." With this exposition of the clause we may compare Virgil's—

"Postera vix summos spargebat lumine montes
Orta dies."

"The following daybreak had scarce begun to sow the mountain-tops with light."

There hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. This is a hyperbolic mode of speech, to denote the extraordinary and unusual severity of the disaster. The Hebrew commentators are at pains to reconcile what appears to them a discrepancy. They say, "It was never known before or since that *four* kinds of locusts came together;" as for the plague of Egypt, there was but one sort of them, they say. The correct explanation is that the like had not been in the *same* country, that is, the land of Judæa, though elsewhere there might have been the like, as in Egypt before, or in other countries since.

Ver. 3.—**A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth.** (1) The fire was the extreme drought preceding them; and the flame refers to the devastation of the locusts, for the places laid waste by them presented the appearance of being burnt with fire, the locusts consuming not only the grain and grass, but the very roots. (2) Or it may refer to the locusts themselves; their destructive power being as though fire spread along before them, and flame swept the ground behind them. (3) Or the fire may have been literally such, the people, in self-defence, kindling it to stop, or turn aside, or drive away the advance of the locust-army. (4) Keil explains this burning heat, heightened into devouring flames of fire, as accompaniments of the Divine Being "as he comes to judgment at the head of his army," like the balls of fire which attended his manifestation in Egypt, and the thunder and lightning amid which he descended at Sinai. **The land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness.** This reference by the first of the prophets to the first book of the Bible is noteworthy. The country before them, with its fertile fields and valuable vineyards, its fruit trees, and pleasant plants, and various cereals resembled a paradise. As they proceeded the corn was consumed, fruit trees and forest trees alike stripped of leaves and left barked and bare, the grass and verdure withered; so that after them

nothing was to be seen but a desolate wilderness. Yea, and nothing shall escape them.

(1) That is, either nothing shall escape the locusts; or (2) Keil contends that the meaning is that "even that which escaped did not remain to it," and refers to the land.

Vers. 4—6.—These verses describe the appearance of the locusts and the alarm which their presence causes.

Ver. 4.—The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses. They are said to resemble horses in the *shape of the head*; hence the Germans call them *Heupferde*, or hay-horses, and the Italians *cavalette*. This resemblance had been noticed long ago by Theodoret, who says, "If any one should examine accurately the head of the locust, he will find it exceedingly like that of a horse." And as horsemen, so shall they run. In *rapidity of motion* they resembled running horses (*parashim*). Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap. This is the next circumstance noticed about them, viz. the *noise* of their motion. Their motion was peculiar; it was springing or leaping, and, when they sprang or leaped, the noise they made resembled the rattling of a jerky two-wheeled war-chariot over a rough mountain-road.

Ver. 5.—The first clause may be understood (1) according to the Authorized Version, whereby the leaping is attributed to the locusts, or (2) *asper* may be understood after chariots, and then the leaping is predicated of the chariots. The last clause of the same verse is capable of three constructions, namely (1) "They shall leap (*yeraqq'dim* being supplied) as a strong people set in battle array;" or (2) "The noise (*qol* understood) shall be as the noise of a strong people set in battle array;" or (3) "They are as a strong people set in battle array." Kimchi interprets according to (2), "As a strong people that is set in array to fight with the people who is opposed to them, who make a great noise and shouting in order to strike terror into their enemies." Like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble. This was the noise made by them, not when they were properly in motion, but when alighting on a district they devoured every green thing in plant, or shrub, or tree—the noise, in fact, which they made when feeding. It resembled the crackling of flame over a field of grain or stubble set on fire. Such was the noise they made when marching, and such the noise they made when foraging—the one was like the rattling of a chariot, the other the crackling of fire. Cyril notices this peculiarity as follows: "They say that their alighting in the fields is effected not without noise; but that a certain shrill noise is produced by their teeth, while they chew into pieces the prostrate grain, as of

wind scattering flame." Thus Thomson also says, "The noise made in marching and foraging was like that of a heavy shower on a distant forest." As a strong people set in battle array. Their progress is thus described: "Their steady though swift advance and regular order resembled an army well equipped and in battle array on its line of march." Cyril says of them, "By reason of their innumerable multitude, not easy to be encountered, but rather very dangerous to be met with." Again he says, "They are an irresistible thing, and altogether invincible by men." Here again the prophet's description is confirmed by the observation of intelligent eye-witnesses. Referring to Solomon's statement, "The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands," Dr. Thomson says, "Nothing in their habits is more striking than the pertinacity with which they all pursue the same line of march, like a disciplined army. As they have no king, they must be influenced by some common instinct."

Ver. 6.—Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness. Peoples or nations writhe in pain or tremble at the sight of them, lest they should settle on their fields and gardens, destroying the "golden glories" of the one, and the "leafy honours" of the other. In the second member the word פָּחַד is (1) generally connected with פָּרַר, a pot, *rad*, פָּרַר, to break in pieces, and translated accordingly. Thus the Septuagint: "Every face is as the blackness of a pot;" the Syriac also: "Every face shall be black as the blackness of a pot;" in like manner the Chaldee: "All faces are covered with soot, so that they are black as a pot." (2) But Aben Ezra connects the word with פָּחַד, to beautify, glorify, adorn, and translates, "They withdraw (gather to themselves) their redness (ruddiness);" that is, they become pale. The 'Speaker's Commentary' adopts this view of the expression, and illustrates it by Shakespeare's fancy of the blood being summoned from the face to help the heart in its death-struggle—

"Being all descended to the labouring heart;
Who, in the conflict that it holds with
death,
Attracts the same for aidance 'gainst the
enemy:
Which with the heart there cools and ne'er
returneth
To blush and beautify the cheek again."

The parallel usually cited in favour of *asaph* being employed in the sense of *withdrawing* is, "And the stars shall withdraw their shining" (ch. ii. 10; iii. 15). This proceeds

on the supposition that *asaph* and *qabhats* have the same meaning of "gathering"—gathering up, gathering in, withdrawing. But D. Kimchi quotes his father (Joseph Kimchi) as objecting to this rendering, on the ground of the distinction which he asserts to prevail between them. *Asaph*, he says, "is used of gathering together, or in, that which is dispersed, or not present; but *qabhats* is not so used."

Vers. 7—9.—The prophet, having mentioned the consternation and terror occasioned by the approach of locusts, proceeds to compare them to an army well equipped and overcoming all impediments.

Ver. 7.—**They shall run like mighty men.** This either refers to their extreme nimbleness or rapidity of motion (compare the Homeric *πόδας ὠκὺς Ἀχιλλεύς, ποδάρκης*, and the like), or describes their running to an assault with intrepid valour and unwearied vigour. **They shall climb the wall like men of war.** This marks the success of their assault; they scale the walls and make good their attack. **And they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks.** Their march is as irresistible as it is orderly. In their onward march each pursues his way, allowing no obstacle to arrest or retard his course; while in a collective body they proceed and maintain their serried ranks unbroken. The verb *מָרַח* is probably cognate with *מָרַח*, to twist, and thus to turn aside. Thus the LXX.: "They shall not turn aside their tracks;" so also the Syriac and Jerome translate it; but the Chaldee compares it with *מָרַח*, a pledge, and, as the deposit is detained till the pledge is redeemed, takes in the meaning of delay. Rosenmüller explains it in the sense of change or exchange, from the Qal, signifying "to receive on loan," and the Hiph., "to give on loan." Otherwise it is to "interweave" (equivalent to *מָרַח*), "change." The sense of the whole is their not diverging to either side, nor straggling out of rank.

Ver. 8.—**Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path.** "And not one shall stand aloof from his brother." This is either the sequence of their not breaking rank, or perhaps it is a co-ordinate particular in the detail. They neither straggle away from each other, and so fall out of rank, nor do they crowd and crush and press each other while keeping rank. The order of their march is perfect, every one keeping his proper place and in the proper path. **And when they fall upon the sword (margin, dart), they shall not be wounded.** The meaning is either (1) that the weapons shall not wound them, or intransitively, as in the text, they shall not be wounded, *יָצַח*, to cut, or break in pieces, being here synony-

mous with *יָצַח*, to wound; or (2) that they do not cut off, break off, or interrupt their course. No force of arms can stay their progress or stop their advance. On this clause Kimchi remarks, "This army is not like other enemies, which you may hinder by the sword from coming upon you; but these light upon the swords, and are not wounded by reason of their lightness." He also remarks on *יָצַח*, "Because he compares them with men and heroes, he uses *יָצַח*, although this word does not apply except to the sons of men."

Ver. 9.—**They shall run to and fro in the city (or rush to the assault of the city.** Wünsche, and so LXX., "They shall seize upon the city"); **they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief.** In the first clause the comparison with an army still continues. The attack has succeeded, the city has been taken by assault, the victorious troops are running to and fro in the city; so far the locusts are fitly represented by an army vigorous in its advance, steady in its march, resistless in its assault, victorious in its attack, and masters of the captured city. The remainder of the ninth verse is not equally applicable to the figure and the fact in common, but belongs exclusively to the locusts themselves; they creep up the wall, climb up upon the houses, and find ingress even at the windows. "There is no road," says Jerome, "impassable to locusts; they penetrate into fields, and crops, and trees, and cities, and even the recesses of the bedchambers;" while Theodoret remarks of locusts that "not only when flying, but by creeping along the walls, they pass through the windows into the houses themselves." Thus there was no spot to which they could not find access, and no place secure from their assault. *Yashoqqu*. Aben Ezra and Kimchi both connect this word with *shoq*, a leg. The latter says, "It has the signification of *shoq*, a leg, and he mentions this word in respect to the locust, because its legs are long; and further, because it is continually going and seldom resting; and thus he (Isaiah) says, 'As the running to and fro of locusts shall he run upon them,' as if he said, 'a continual going up and down.'"

Vers. 10, 11.—These verses picture the dreadful consequences of the then present and temporary visitation of the locusts, and of the future and final judgment of which it was a type. **The earth shall quake before them;** (1) the locusts. **The heavens tremble.** The alighting of the locusts on the earth would make it quake, and their flight through the heavens would make it tremulous. As applied to the visitation of locusts, the language would be hyperbolic,

unless we accept Jerome's explanation as follows: "It is not that the strength of the locusts is so great that they can move the heavens and shake the earth, but that to those who suffer from such calamities, from the amount of their own terror the heavens appear to shake and the earth to reel." (2) Before *him*; i.e. Jehovah himself amid the storm; and all in accordance with fact. But a greater judgment than that of the locusts is typified by the language of the prophet. Kimchi observes on this (tenth) verse that "all the expressions are parabolical, or figurative, to set forth the greatness of a calamity; for this is the usage of Scripture, as, 'The sun shall be darkened in his going forth,' and the like." So also Abarbanel on this verse: "Which all is a parabolical expression of the calamities of the Jews." Aben Ezra understands it differently: "Men of the earthquake." Rashi: "The heavens quake and tremble because of the punishment that comes upon Israel." The second part of the verse, as also the verse following, appear to us to indicate this. The sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining; and the Lord shall utter his voice before his army. That a storm succeeded and put an end to the plague of locusts, and that the darkening of the sun and moon and stars signified the obscuration of the heavenly luminaries by the storm-clouds that overspread the heavens and darkened the face of day, would fall short of expressions of such solemn grandeur as are here employed by the prophet. Besides, our Lord applies language of the same import to the last judgment in the Gospels: "The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven." Thunder, no doubt, is the voice of the Lord, which he utters while marching at the head of his army to execute judgment and manifest his wrath against his enemies. For his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it? Three reasons are here assigned for the preceding sublime description of Jehovah coming to judgment at the head of his hosts. These are the following: the greatness of his army in number and might; the power with which his army executes his word of command; and the terrible character of the day of judgment when the vials of Divine wrath shall be poured forth.

Vers. 12-14.—The judgment of the locusts was typical of the great day of judgment. The terrors of that day were designed to

bring the people to repentance. Thus judgment was mingled with mercy.

Ver. 12.—Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with great fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. At this period of sore judgment God, by the prophet, calls upon the people to return and repent, to fast and to weep, to grieve inwardly and mourn outwardly for sin. He also instructs them how to engage in the duty of humiliation aright and acceptably. The humiliation was to be that of the heart—sorrow of heart for the sins by which they had offended God, inward shame on account of those iniquities by which they had wronged their own souls and marred their own best interests. But while there behoved to be this inward contrition, outward expressions of it were also required. Genuine sorrow and shame for sin were to be accompanied by fasting, tears of penitence, and other indications of mourning. *With all your heart.* Kimchi comments thus: "That your repentance be not with a heart and a heart."

Ver. 13.—And rend your heart, and not your garments; and turn unto the Lord your God. Where there is real contrition of spirit because of sin, outward manifestations are both suitable and proper, though not by way of display or for sake of ostentation. But they were reminded, on the other hand, that mere outward manifestations avail nothing unless there also exist the deep inward feelings which are in harmony with and naturally underlie those manifestations. Out of such inward feelings those outward expressions properly originate; hence, after the exhortation to fasting and weeping and mourning, it is added, "Rend your heart, and not your garments." To rend the garments, among the Jews, was a token of great grief, and imported that the individual who did so was overwhelmed with excessive sorrow, or had encountered some terrible calamity. Thus we read of Jacob, on receiving his son Joseph's coat of many colours, rending his clothes, putting sackcloth on his loins, and mourning for his son many days (comp. also 2 Chron. xxxiv. 27). In these instances the sorrow was deep and genuine and bitter. It was possible, however, to exhibit the external signs of grief without any such corresponding inward feeling of sorrow; just as it is still possible for men to draw near to God with their lips while the heart is far from him. To prevent such hypocritical pretence they are commanded to rend their hearts, and not their garments only. There was no impropriety in rending their garments in token of great grief for sin and of great indignation against themselves for their folly, but the command imports that they were not to rest in the

outward sign without the reality of the thing signified. For he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. To the exhortation he subjoins the encouraging manifestation of the Divine character with which God, ages before, had favoured Moses, substituting for "truth" the trait of character best suited to the present emergency. He is not an absolute God or an inexorable God, but their covenant God and Father who invites them even to himself, against whom they had so heinously sinned and whom they had so grievously offended.

Ver. 14.—Who knoweth if he will return and repent; that is, return from and repent of his purpose of executing judgment. And leave a blessing behind him; that is, leave behind him when returning from the exercise of judgment to resume his seat on the heavenly throne, the blessing being a replacement of the harvest fruits which the locusts had consumed, even a meat offering and a drink offering, for the service of the sanctuary as well as sustenance to supply the people's own bodily wants. Jerome explains the question of ver. 14 with much judgment as follows: "Lest perchance they might either despair on account of the magnitude of their crimes, or the greatness of the Divine clemency might make them careless." Besides (1) the interrogative rendering, there is (2) that of the Chaldee, followed by Rashi and Kimchi. The latter says, "He that knows the way of repentance, let him repent, and God will repent of this evil." Also in addition to (1), that is, Authorized Version, he (*i.e.* God) "shall leave a blessing," there is (2) that of Rashi and Aben Ezra, who explain as follows: "Perhaps God will repent, and that army shall leave a blessing, out of which they may make a meat offering and a drink offering."

Vers. 15—17.—"The harsh blast of the consecrated ram's horn called an assembly for an extraordinary fast. Not a soul was to be absent. Like the fiery cross, it convened old and young, men and women, mothers with infants at their breasts, the bridegroom and the bride on their bridal day. All were there stretched in front of the altar. The altar itself presented the dreariest of all sights—a hearth without its sacred fire, a table spread without its sacred feast. The priestly caste, instead of gathering as usual upon its steps and its platform, were driven, as it were, to the further space; they turned their backs to the dead altar, and lay prostrate, gazing towards the Invisible Presence within the sanctuary. Instead of the hymns and music which, since the time of David, had entered into their prayers, there was nothing heard but the passionate sobs and the loud dissonant

howls such as only an Eastern hierarchy could utter. Instead of the mass of white mantles which they usually presented, they were wrapt in black goat's-hair sackcloth, twisted round them, not with the brilliant sashes of the priestly attire, but with a rough girdle of the same texture, which they never unbound night or day. What they wore of their common dress was rent asunder or cast off. With bare breasts they waved their black drapery towards the temple, and shrieked aloud, 'Spare thy people, O Lord!' " Such is Dean Stanley's vivid picture of the circumstances and scene described by the prophet in the above verses. A scene exceedingly similar occurs in the commencement of the 'Œdipus Tyrannus' of Sophocles—

"Why sit ye here, my children, younger brood

Of Cadmus famed of old, in solemn state,
Your hands thus wreathed with the sup-
pliants' boughs?

And all the city reeks with incense,

And all re-echoes with your hymns and
groans;

And I, my children, counting it unmeet

To hear report from others, I have come
Myself, whom all name Œdipus the Great."

Vers. 18—27 form the sequel of this chapter in the Hebrew, but five additional verses make up the chapter in the Authorized Version. These are divisible into two parts. In the first division the prophet assures his countrymen of the bestowal of temporal mercies, and in the second of the promise of spiritual blessings.

Ver. 18.—The futures of this verse with *vav consec.* are properly taken as perfects; nor is there any inconsistency, provided we understand, as following ver. 17 and preceding ver. 18, the fact that the priests had engaged in the penitence enjoined, and offered the supplication to which they had been summoned; neither is the omission of any express mention of the circumstance thus supposed to intervene between these verses any valid objection, especially as the grammar favours the view in question. Then follows a manifestation of God's mercy in answer to the assumed penitence and prayer of his servants. God's jealousy and pity are both engaged—his jealousy for his land, and his compassion for his people. His jealousy is figurative, and the allusion is probably to that of a husband who is jealous on account of any dishonour done to his wife, and who resents it more keenly than a dishonour offered to himself. The pity is such as God ever manifests to his people when penitent; for "Like as a father pitieth

his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."

Ver. 19.—Yea, the Lord will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith. The Lord's answer comes in the shape of a promise of relief of which man and beast were so sorely in need. The promise, with deliverance from distress, couples ample abundance. The corn and the wine and the oil—the three great temporal blessings, equivalent to food, refreshment, and ornament—which the locusts had destroyed, as we read in ver. 10, God here promises to restore, and to restore not merely to the extent that was barely necessary, but in full and abundant measure, so that they would be satisfied therewith. (1) The verbs of *fulness* or *want, clothing and unclothing, going or coming and dwelling*, govern an accusative; hence *וְכָל* has the accusative *אֵרֶץ*; sometimes it is constructed with *וְ* or *בְּ*. (2) There are two constructions of a participle with a pronoun as subject—that in which the pronoun is written in its separate form in immediate connection with the participle, and that in which it is appended as a suffix. (3) The words *dagan* from *dagah*, to multiply; *yishar* from *tsahar*, to shine; and *tirosk* from *yarash*, to take possession of the brain, have each the article prefixed, to emphasize the products restored by the Divine mercy. The article, no doubt, is prefixed to the names of classes of objects generally known. And I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen. No more would they be a reproach or byword among the heathen, sneered at, as though God had abandoned them in his sore displeasure, or through sheer impotence had been unable to help them. All this God promised to do in answer to the prayers of his people. Such was the result of penitence, and such the power of prayer. *Cherpath* is a second accusative, or, more correctly, an appositional accusative to *etihem*. The construction with *ל'* frequently takes the place of the second accusative, as in the seventeenth verse of the same chapter.

Ver. 20.—But I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea. This verse promises the destruction of the devastator. The prophet here specifies the means by which the Eternal was going to restore the blessings of harvest. The order of sequence is inverted—the effect preceding the cause; thus, restoration of prosperity and plenty goes before, and the cause thereof, being relief from invasion and loss, follows after. Nor is there anything singular in this, as men are more

alive to recovery from a distressful state of any kind than to the remedy which effects it. The "army" of this verse we still hold to be the tribes of locusts, which, like an invading army, with its numerous regimental divisions, had overrun the land, scattering dismay and distress wherever it advanced; yet from this very verse, and the expression "northern" in particular, it has been argued that it cannot refer to locusts, but to human invaders symbolized by locusts and the havoc wrought by them. (1) The north is not the native land of locusts; it is rather the south—the Arabian, Lybian, or Egyptian desert. But (2) "northern" may denote the quarter from which the locusts appeared to the prophet in vision to enter the land; or, driven upward by a south wind which regularly blows, as we are informed, in those regions during spring, and then to the north of Palestine by an east wind which blows with similar regularity in summer, and again into and ultimately out of Palestine by the north wind blowing in the autumn. "In this case," says a writer in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' "the northern plague would have been a natural expression for an inhabitant of Jerusalem to use in speaking of the locusts; as natural as it would be for a Londoner to speak of a pestilence that had commenced its ravages in Great Britain at Edinburgh, as coming to him from the north, though it were originally imported from France or Spain." The word (3) may symbolically denote "calamitous," according to the explanation of some, since calamity is so frequently represented as coming from the north, so that the north is more or less identified with disaster; thus we read in Jer. iv. 6, "I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction." It may, however, be safely admitted that, by the locust, the northern or Assyrian enemies of Judah, who advanced from the north as the most accessible quarter for attack, are in a subsidiary sense represented. The expulsion of these enemies brings relief; they are driven into a parched, and so desert and desolate, land; "and there," as Kimchi observes, "they shall die because they shall find nothing to eat." That land may be either the Idumean desert south of Judah or Arabia Deserta. Thus the main body of the great locust-army perishes in the southern desert; while the van of the army is driven into the Dead Sea, and the rear of it into the Mediterranean Sea. Or, more literally, the face of this locust-host was towards the east, or front sea, that is, as already intimated, the Dead Sea eastward; his hinder part toward the west, or hinder sea, that is, the Mediterranean westward. Thus they were driven in every other direction than that by which they came, namely,

south, east, and west. In marking the quarters of the world, the Jews faced the east, so that the west was behind them, the south on their right hand, and the north on their left. We have thus a most vivid picture of the speedy and total destruction of the locusts. After expulsion, no danger was to be apprehended from them, for, blown into the sea or desert, they perished at once and for ever. The terms employed are very graphic; thus, *me'alekem* is much more than *milkkem* would be, and imply that a heavy burden was lifted *from upon*, or up off the face of a desolated land, and the heart of a distressed people. And his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things; margin, *magnified to do*. The stench emitted from the putrefying bodies of those locusts would be sickening and stifling—sufficient to occasion a pestilence. Many testimonies from travellers and others prove the reality of both circumstances—the ill savour and its pestiferous nature. Several expressions in this verse are applicable enough to an army, as in the last clause, where he is said to do great things, or literally, “magnified to do,” that is, magnified himself in his doings; it may, however, apply equally well to the great destruction by the locust-army. There is no doubt the superadded notion of haughtiness along with that of great doings. It really means that, as an instrument of God, they had effected a fearfully violent desolation, and this is assigned as a reason for the total destruction of those locusts.

Vers. 21—23.—In these verses the land and beasts and men are addressed respectively. Thus the promise is fully developed. In ver. 21 the prophet summons the earth; in ver. 22 the beasts of the field; and in ver. 23 the sons of Zion; all are called to joy and gladness on account of the great deliverance from destruction which the Lord had wrought for them. They are all called on to rejoice in the great deliverance; the land, personified, is summoned to exult and rejoice for the great things God now promises to do or is doing to it. If the locusts had done great things in destruction, God will do great things in deliverance. The beasts are also personified, and forbidden to be afraid; for whereas they had groaned and cried for want of herbage when the pastures were burnt up, those pastures are now beginning to spring, and the fruit trees yield their strength. The children of Zion are invited to rejoice, not only in the delivered land, or springing pastures, or fruitful figs, or blooming vines, or other trees however useful or ornamental; but, as became them with their superior intelligence, in the Lord their God, as the Father of mercies and the Giver of every good and perfect gift,

whether temporal or spiritual. At the same time, their temporal wants would be attended to, and their land fertilized by the suitable and sustaining shower. The prophet individualizes the earth, the beasts of the field, and the sons of Zion.

Ver. 21.—**Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the Lord will do great things.** The land had suffered severely from the drought connected with the locusts; but is now summoned to joy and gladness. The prophet assigns for this an appropriate reason: the locusts had done great things in damaging it; Jehovah now does great things in their destruction. When the earth clothes itself with verdure, and brings forth its fruits and flowers and various products, it is said, by a bold but beautiful personification, to rejoice and even exult. Thus the Latins said in like manner, *Rident arva, ridet ager*. Things are now reversed. Instead of mourning, is exultation; instead of mourning and its visible emblem in girding with sadness, there is joy and gladness; instead of the day of the Lord, very great and terrible or fearful, is “Fear not.” *S'māchī* is fem. imper. Qal in pause for the ordinary *simchī*.

Ver. 22.—**Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field.** The dumb animals had groaned in distress for food, but now they too have cause to rejoice, and are here called on to do so; and the suitable cause in their case is also specified. It is as follows: For the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength. He thus specifies the ground of gladness in their case also, pointing to the fresh green of the pastures and the fruit hanging in rich abundance and variety on the trees. The fruits of vines and fig trees are not, it is true, the food of the beasts of the fields; but the revival of vegetation in trees, the higher and larger growths, the chief factor in which is moisture, comprehends the revival of the smaller growths of herbs, grasses, and plants, the proper sustenance of cattle. Kimchi's explanation is that “as the tree bears its fruit in the inhabited part of the world, so in the wilderness the places of pasture grow green.” Aben Ezra, who never loses an opportunity of directing attention to contrasts wherever they exist, contrasts “Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field,” in this verse with “the beasts of the field cry also unto thee” at the close of the preceding chapter; also “the pastures of the wilderness do spring” with “the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness;” likewise “the tree beareth her fruit” with “all the trees of the field are withered.” It has been observed that all plants, even shrubs and trees, spring up at the first as the fresh

young juicy green of plants, עֵשֶׂב; then they develop into קֶמֶץ or קֶמֶר, grass; into herb, עֵשֶׂב; and into tree, עֵץ. עֵשֶׂב is not the plural for עֵשֶׂב, but singular, after the analogy of עֵץ (Ps. xvi. 12). *Nasagari*, equivalent to "lift up, bear," is more poetical than *asah* פָּרַח, equivalent to "make fruit;" so in Latin, *sursum fruges*. The expression, "yield their strength," puts the cause for the effect; the strength of the tree produces the fruit and centres in it.

Ver. 23.—Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God. They had keenly felt and deeply bewailed the unparalleled catastrophe which had befallen land and cattle and inhabitants, and also themselves among the number. The sons of Zion are the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the capital, in which was the national sanctuary for the worship of Jehovah. Not only are the inhabitants of Jerusalem included, but, as the capital often stood for the whole country, all the inhabitants of Judah are comprehended under the "children of Zion." The ground of their gladness and joy in God is: For he hath given you the former rain moderately (margin, *a teacher of righteousness, or for righteousness*), and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. Omitting for the present the disputed word *hammoreh*, we have the great blessing which was so much needed. The blessing bestowed was twofold—negative in the destruction of the locusts and deliverance from their ravages; and positive in the plentiful rainfall, *geshem*, the great and beneficent fertilizer of the dried-up and desolated land. But this abundant rain is more closely particularized as the early or October rain, *moreh*, which, falling at the seed-time in autumn, promoted the germination and growth of the seed just sown; and as the latter, or March rain, *malqosh*, which, bestowed in the spring season a short time before harvest, matured the crops. The *geshem*, or shower, may be regarded here as the generic name, and of these the two species are the *moreh* and *malqosh*, from *laqash*, to be ripe or late, just explained. The word *hammoreh* in the early part of the verse is translated (1) "teacher" in the Chaldee and Vulgate, by Jerome, by Abarbanel among the Hebrew commentators, who refers it to Messiah; among modern commentators by Hofman, referring it to Joel himself, by Hengstenberg, who understands it of the ideal teacher or collective body of messengers from God. Keil also renders, "the teacher for righteousness," and applies the expression to the instructions of Moses, the priests, and the prophets, not excluding Messiah himself. He also understands the

prophet to speak of both spiritual and material blessings, giving a fuller explication of the latter in vers. 28—27, and of the former in vers. 28—32 and in the last chapter. The two considerations that seem to have most weight with Keil in inclining him to this exposition are the presence of the article with *moreh*, and the non-physical sense of *litsdaqah*; hence Ewald's "rain for righteousness," i.e. a sign from God of their being adopted again into righteousness. But weight-stones and scales have *teedeq* attached in the physical sense of correctness, while ethical rightness is only an inference or subordinate notion (see Lev. xix. 36; Ps. xxiii. 3). The translation (2) of "rain" is, we think, justly entitled to the preference from the context. Among promises of repairing the damage done by the locusts, it would be obviously out of place to introduce the notion of "a teacher." Of the Hebrew expositors, Aben Ezra and Kimchi both understand the word in the sense of rain; the former says, "In my opinion it is the same as *yoreh*;" and the latter, "*Hammoreh* is the same as *yoreh*." So also Calvin, Rosenmüller, Hitzig, and Wünsche. The etymology also is favourable to this view, for both *yoreh* and *moreh* are from the verb *yorah*, to throw (Hiph., cause to throw), throw down as drops, wet, besprinkle, equivalent to פָּרַח, and as the Qal and Hiph. sometimes coincide in meaning, we may safely conclude *moreh* synonymous with *yoreh*, the meaning of which is unquestionably "rain," specially *verbs* *πρόσφορος*. (a) Rain in right measure, then, we take to be the true meaning; not (b) rain according to righteousness, as though God, in accordance with his righteousness, repented of the evil he thought to do unto them, and, in consequence of their forsaking their sins, sent the fertilizing rains. Again, *barishon* is rendered by some (a) as if *kebarishon* were equivalent to "as in the former time;" thus the LXX., καθὼς ἐμπροσθεν; Vulgate, *Sicuti in principio*. But we prefer (b) the rendering, "in the first month," so the Chaldee, "In the month Nisan, or March." The Hebrew commentators explain it in like manner; thus Rashi, "In the first month—in Nisan;" Aben Ezra, "And the meaning of 'in the first' is in the first month;" Kimchi, "The explanation of the rain that is called *moreh*, he sends it down to you in its season, which is *Marchesvan* (or October), and he causes to descend to you in like manner the *malqosh* (the latter rain) in its season in the first month, which is Nisan." The blessing of the rain was thus greatly enhanced by being sent in the right measure and at the suitable season.

Vers. 24—27.—In these verses the prophet pictures the blessed effects of the abundant rain on the parched and barren land,

Ver. 24 presents a contrast to vers. 10—12 of ch. i.; while the promise of corn and wine and oil in ver. 19, with which the present is closely connected, is performed. The perfects exhibit the Divine promise as actually accomplished. (1) The word *רָץ*, from *רָץ*, to separate, denotes the pure grain separated from the husk or chaff and straw. (2) *רָץ* is “to run,” and in Hiph., “to cause to run” as of fluids, then overflow; and Pilel in Ps. lxxv. 10, *shoqeq*, “to cause to overflow.” (3) *אָר*, equivalent to *אָר*, is a vessel bored or hewn out, then the vat into which the wine trodden out in the wine-press, or the oil trodden out in the oil-press, flows; while *רָץ* is the press in which wine or oil, especially the former, is trodden out. I will restore to you the years. This denotes either (1) the greatness and violence of the destruction, made by the locusts, or (2) it implies that, only for the timely interposition of Jehovah in destroying the locusts, the people would have had to sustain the loss of the harvest, not of one year only, but of several—in other words, the disastrous effects of their ravages would have been felt for a number of years; but (3) not that the locusts invaded the land several successive years. The absence of the copula before *yeleg*, and its presence before the last two names, viz. *chasil* and *gazam*, prove that these three names, being thus co-ordinated, are either epithets or species of *arbeh*; thus, the losses of the years which the locust, or multitudinous one, hath eaten—the lickers and the devourer and the biter (or gnawer)—were compensated. Abarbanel maintains these names of the locusts to refer to the four world-powers that one after another desolated Palestine: “For they,” he says, “were the army of Jehovah and the messengers of his providence to punish Israel by their means.” The effect of the plentiful supply of their wants and of the full satisfaction enjoyed thereby becomes the occasion of devout acknowledgment of God as their Protector and Patron, and of the warmest expressions of gratitude for his goodness, so they praise the Name of the Lord their God, that had dealt wondrously with them; literally, *had acted towards them even to the doing of wonders*. Then follows the practical conclusion, very poetically expressed, and comprising the assurance of the presence of God among his people, his sole Divinity and sure protection of them, a guarantee of his grace to them at all times, freedom from reproach and shame overmore. Thus closes the promise of temporal or material blessings. “Ye shall recognize,” says Kimchi, “that I am in your midst, hearing your cries.”

Vers. 28—32.—These verses form a

chapter (the third) by themselves in the Hebrew text, but in the LXX. and the Authorized Version they conclude ch. ii. In them the prophet passes on to spiritual blessings.

Vers. 28, 29.—And it shall come to pass afterward (*achshereken*). This intimates the time when the promised blessing is to be bestowed, and must be read in the light of New Testament exposition; for Peter, in quoting the words (Acts ii. 17, etc.), varies the prophet's note of time by substituting an explanatory phrase, viz. *ἐν ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις*, “in the last days”—an expression which, as is acknowledged, refers to the days of the Messiah or the last days of the old dispensation. The apostle thus defines more closely the somewhat indefinite expression of the Hebrew. After this specification of the time, he proceeds to state the blessing to be bestowed. I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh. The word *shaphak*, employed by the prophet to express the outpouring of the Spirit, implies the bestowal of the gift in great abundance, as Calvin clearly pointed out: “For *shaphak*,” he says, “does not mean merely to give in drops, but to pour out in great abundance. But God did not pour out the Holy Spirit so abundantly or copiously under the Law, as he has since the manifestation of Christ.” The Spirit was indeed communicated in Old Testament times, but that communication was restricted in two ways—in quantity, and in the number of recipients; the former was comparatively scanty and the latter few, whereas the word here applied to its communication implies a rich supply, like a copious rainfall. After the specification of the time, and the mention of the blessing, with its implied *plentifulness*, comes its *wide diffusion*, or general distribution—“all flesh,” or “all mankind,” as the Hebrew expression denotes; and that without regard to age, or sex, or state. And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit. Sons and daughters without distinction of sex; old men and young men without reference to age; servants and handmaids without regard to social position. Thus it is with the Spirit of God as with the Son of God, of whom the apostle says, “There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.” The blessing of salvation through the Son of God and by the Spirit of God is wide as the world in its offer, and free to all who accept it—without national distinction, for there is neither Jew nor Greek; without

social distinction, for there is neither bond nor free; without sexual distinction, for there is neither male nor female; without ceremonial distinction, for there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision; without intellectual or educational distinction, for the barbarian and even the Scythian, the lowest type of barbarian, are free to share the blessing. The *vegam* before the "servants" and "handmaids," rendered in the citation by Peter, not as in the LXX. by a simple *kal*, but by *kal ye*, and in the Authorized Version "and also," is an emphatic addition to the previous enumeration, equivalent to "nay more" and implying something extraordinary and unexpected, that not only the weaker sex, but the meanest of both sexes, were to participate in the blessing. "Not a single case," says Keil, "occurs in the whole of the Old Testament of a slave receiving the gift of prophecy." The *mode* in which spiritual communication is (1) according to some is that of visions to the young, whose fancy is more vigorous; that of dreams to the old, in the decadence of their mental powers; while to the sons and daughters the gift is prophesying. Others more correctly (2) understand prophecy as the general term for speaking under the Spirit's influence or instructing by Divine inspiration; while the two forms of prophetic revelation are dreams when the mental "faculties are suspended by natural causes," and visions or trances when "suspended by supernatural causes," the communication in either case being supernatural. This prediction began to be fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost.

Ver. 30.—**And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.** Along with the wonderful distribution of gifts and graces at the Day of Pentecost, attention is directed to portents of destructive visitation; after a dispensation of mercy follows a dispensation of wrath; mercy and judgment thus succeed each other in the providence of God. The visitation of mercy may, by way of contrast, suggest that of judgment; or the connection of this and the following verses with the preceding may be the plague of the locusts, the mind passing on from that visitation to the visitation at the destruction of Jerusalem, as also to that which shall take place at the judgment of the last day. Our Lord, in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, seems to mingle the portents which were to precede the destruction of Jerusalem with those that shall usher in the judgment-day. There may be some doubt whether the expressions before us are to be understood literally or figuratively. In either case coming events were casting their shadows before; and the appearances enumerated, whether taken in

a literal or figurative sense, were symbolical of great revolutionary changes. The expressions themselves reflect the miracles of Egypt. Of the wonders on earth which the prophet first mentions, the *blood* brings to mind the changing of the Nile-water into blood; the *fire* reminds us of the fire that ran along upon the ground, mingled with the hail; while the *smoke* carries back our thoughts to the wonderful events of the wilderness and of the encampment at Sinai, when, as Jehovah descended upon the mount, "Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace."

Ver. 31.—**The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come.** These wonders in the heavens follow the wonders on earth, and these obscurations of the heavenly bodies—the darkening of the sun and the dull blood-like appearance of the moon—were portents of coming judgment. These miraculous phenomena, if literally employed, may refer to those portentous sights which, as the Jewish historian Josephus and the Roman historian Tacitus testify, were witnessed, both by besiegers and besieged, during the siege and before the destruction of Jerusalem. But taken symbolically, as is preferable, blood symbolizes bloodshed; fire, the firing of a town in time of war; and pillars of smoke, the clouds of smoke rolling up to heaven from the burning or smouldering ruins of a town or city set on fire by the enemy; while the darkening of the sun and the turning of the moon into a dull blood-red would portend approaching judgment, and a change, political and ecclesiastical, in the existing constitution of things. More particularly, by reading Joel's prophecy in the light of the New Testament, we shall understand with tolerable clearness the meaning of the symbols of the sun and moon. The symbolic language of Joel's prediction found its fulfilment, at least in part, within less than half a century from the time when Peter spoke. Scarce forty years from that Pentecostal outpouring and the ruling powers, *civil and ecclesiastical*, of the Jewish nation came to an end. The Jewish Church and Hebrew commonwealth went out in darkness. The moon of the latter began to wane from the first day the Roman power was set up in Palestine, but at the destruction of the capital the light of that moon was extinguished for ever; the sun of the former was long getting obscured by clouds, but at last it underwent a total and final eclipse. But why, it may be asked, are sun and moon thus symbolic of rulers superior and inferior, or of rulers of greater and less importance,

or of rulers in Church and state? By the original constitution of these luminaries, as specified in the record of Creation, they were actually appointed to this, and so naturally enough the physical here, as elsewhere, underlies the symbolic, as we read, "God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night." Thus what was commenced when Judæa became a Roman province was completed when Jerusalem was destroyed and the temple burnt by the Roman army under Titus. "The day of the Lord" is an expression very common with the prophets, and always expressive of some severe visitation or special judgment. Thus we read in this same Book of the Prophet Joel, "The

day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come." Again in Amos v. 18, "The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light." But other days of judicial visitation were not to be compared with this. The day of Babylon's destruction is called by Isaiah simply "the day of the Lord;" so Jeremiah speaks of the day of the destruction of Pharaoh's army at the Euphrates as "the day of the Lord;" and Joel himself designates the day of Jerusalem's destruction of Nebuchadnezzar as "the day of the Lord." But the day mentioned in the text before us is "that great and notable day of the Lord," and so it was the day of the final destruction and desolation of Jerusalem.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—3.—*The purposes for which a trumpet was blown and an alarm sounded.*

I. THE PARTICULAR PURPOSE ON THIS OCCASION.

II. THE PLACE WHERE THE WARNING WAS GIVEN.

III. THE PRIESTS WHO WERE TO SOUND THE ALARM. We are informed in Numb. x. 8 that it was the "sons of Aaron, the priests," that were to blow with the trumpets, either in sounding the alarm of war, or convening an assembly of the people, or for the journeying of the camps. Similar is the duty of the ministers of religion.

IV. THE PERSONS TO WHOM THE WARNING IS ADDRESSED. They are all the inhabitants of the land without exception, for all more or less add their quota to the national sin, share consequently in the national danger.

V. THE PECULIARITIES OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES SO VIVIDLY PICTURED BY THE PROPHET. While the peculiar circumstances of the visitation which the prophet portrays intensify the approaching disaster, they at the same time emphasize his preceding exhortation. In this picture of the prophet we have (1) his description of the day of the Lord, and (2) the destruction that succeeded. The description represents that day as a day of darkness and, by way of gradation, of gloominess, that is, of still greater darkness; as a day of clouds and of densely dark clouds; as the morning gray, the darkest hour between midnight and dawn, spread upon the mountains. The locust-people that made it so were great in number and great in strength, unequalled in the past and unparalleled in the future, through all the rolling years of many generations. The destruction was terrible in the extreme, as if a devouring fire went before them and a burning flame followed them. The havoc they made reduced a garden to a desert, and Eden itself to a wilderness; in a word, it was unescapable.

Vers. 4—11.—*The way in which God executes his judgments.* In these verses we are taught many important and solemn lessons in connection with the Divine judgments and their execution.

I. THE AGENTS EMPLOYED. 1. These may appear to us in themselves very insignificant; but when executing his commission and armed with his wrath they are truly terrible. To the eye and to the ear that terror made its appeal; the sight of them was awe-inspiring, the sound of them frightful. Both on the march and while feeding they caused sounds harsh and horrible. 2. The natural effect of their approach was pain and fear. The people to whom they came were affrighted by their appearance, but still more were they alarmed for their property, which they well knew was exposed to havoc and utter destruction. How men should stand in awe of the judgments of God, and especially of sin as that which brings down those judgments! "Stand in awe, and sin not!"

II. THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THEIR MISSION. 1. The ministers of the Divine vengeance do their work *speedily*. Never did mighty men do their work more speedily,

and never did men of war, with all their training and organization, do it more thoroughly. They do their work *systematically*, each marching according to the appointed plan, while none leaves his proper path or quits his allotted rank. Without either struggling or jostling, they advance directly and determinedly to accomplish the work assigned them. They in consequence do their work *surely*. Resistance is in vain and escape impossible; it is thus with the agents and instrumentalities which God employs for the purposes of deserved wrath. 2. Should not men, when sent as messengers of his mercy, observe like order and regularity, like system in arrangements and speed in execution? It is thus with the heavenly messengers; for God makes his angels swift as the winds and strong as the fiery flames in bearing God's messages and in ministering to God's saints.

III. THE ALARMS OF MINOR JUDGMENTS. Weak and mean as the instruments of his wrath were individually, God made them by their multitudinous masses a mighty engine for spreading desolation and terror. It needs but a slight touch of his finger to lay men's possessions, or comforts, or enjoyments in the dust.

Vers. 12—17.—These verses summon the people to *humiliation for sin, and thanksgiving for mercy*. God, by his prophet, does not forbid the outward sign of sorrow, so customary among Orientals and common among the Jews; he rather insists upon the presence of the thing signified, without which the sign was more a mockery than a reality.

I. THE OCCASION OF THE HUMILIATION. It was an earnest time with the people of the southern kingdom. Terrible desolation had been made in the land of Judah. An army of locusts had been the agents of Divine vengeance; sin had been the cause; the author of the punishment was God. "The prophet had described at length the coming of God's judgments as a mighty army. But, lest amid the judgments men should (as they often do) forget the Judge, he represents God as commanding this his army, gathering, ordering, marshalling, directing them, giving them the word when and upon whom they should pour themselves. Their presence was a token of this. They should neither anticipate that command nor linger. But as an army awaits the command to move, and then, the word being given, rolls on instantly, so God's judgments await the precise moment of his will, and then fall."

II. THE NATURE OF THE HUMILIATION.

III. THE MOTIVES TO HUMILIATION.

IV. THE METHOD OF THEIR HUMILIATION. 1. A great variety of circumstances is to be attended to. (1) There is the signal to be given: "Blow the trumpet in Zion." (2) Serious preparation made for a fast: "Sanctify a fast." (3) The summoning of a solemn assembly: "Call a solemn assembly." (4) The convocation of the people: "Gather the people" (*am*); and, (5) when they were thus convened and in consequence came together, they were consecrated into a solemn assembly (*qahal*): "Sanctify the congregation." (6) The constituent elements of the assembly embraced the oldest and the youngest, with ages intermediate—elders and sucklings, and even children of tender years; nor could the newly married, who at other times were exempted from war or pressing duties, claim exemption now; nay, on the very day of their bridal, the bridegroom was called forth out of his chamber and the bride out of her closet to join the multitude of mourners, and share in the public humiliation and national sorrow. 2. The services of the occasion were to be conducted in an orderly and becoming manner. Everything connected with the house and service of God requires to be done decently and in good order. Thus, in the passage before us, nothing is left to haphazard; nor did anything remain to be improvised on the spur of the moment, and after the assembly met. (1) The persons who were to conduct the solemn service were appointed—the priests, the ministers of the Lord; (2) the place they were to occupy was pointed out—between the porch and the altar; (3) the part they were to take in the duties of the day was assigned them—weeping for their own sins and the sins of the people; (4) the prayer they were to pray was prescribed to them. 3. The prayer itself (1) pleads for *sparing* mercy re-echoed in the petitions of the Litany, "Remember not, Lord, our offences, nor the offences of our forefathers; neither take thou vengeance of our sins: spare us, good Lord, spare thy people, whom thou hast redeemed with thy most precious blood, and be not angry with us for ever." The second petition of the

prayer deprecates the prospect of God's heritage becoming a reproach, and being ultimately enslaved by their heathen neighbours through feebleness and destitution which had been occasioned by the famine. (2) The plea suggested by the prophet to the people is twofold, and forms the ground of each petition. It is "*thy people*, O Lord; *thy heritage*." They were still God's people, punished, severely punished, and, it must be added, severely punished for their sins, but now penitent and petitioning for pardon. They were still more; they were God's heritage, his peculiar treasure, segregated from the surrounding nations and set apart for the communication of his revelations, and to be the conservators of his oracles. Nor was there any presumption in reminding God of this; they were only acting as God's remembrancers in relation to both his purpose and his promise. The glory of God as well as the good of his people was imperilled. "Wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?" In this way the heathen used to boast, as we learn from the boastful words of Sennacherib when he asks, "Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad?" Even such are the words of Jehovah himself when he asks, in relation to the vanities of the heathen, "Where are now their gods, their rock in whom they trusted?"

Vers. 18—20.—These verses prove the efficacy of prayer. No one who believes in a personal God, no one who believes in a God who rules and governs all, and no one especially who believes in the Bible as the Word of God, can doubt or deny the efficacy of prayer.

HERE FOLLOWS IN A SERIES GOD'S REGARD TO HIS PEOPLE AND RESPONSE TO THEIR PRAYERS. He regards their impoverished condition, he repairs their losses, he removes their reproach, and he repels the immediate cause of their desolation. 1. The *restoration of amicable relations is promised*. The first promise here is of a general nature, and includes God's acceptance of and affection for penitents. He graciously acknowledges his covenant relation to them and special interest in them. Both their persons and their property are owned by him. The people are *his people*; their land is *his land*. The land of promise was his in a peculiar sense; but God has respect to the possessions of his people, wherever situated; their concerns and enjoyments are precious in his esteem. The consequence is, the implied avowal of a twofold relationship, marital and paternal. "Thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married;" these words of the Prophet Isaiah distinctly express the former of the two relations referred to, while the feeling of jealousy springs therefrom. Thus, as a husband is jealous of the honour of his wife and of himself, and ready to resent any insult or injury offered to his partner, so the Lord promises to be jealous for his land—that land to which he admits by implication such an endearing and delicate relation. And "as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Like a tender, compassionate parent, he pities his people in any season or circumstances of distress, and pledges his love and power for their relief. 2. A *rich supply of temporal blessings is guaranteed*. This would naturally suggest itself as a practical and particular result of the general statement of the dual relationship already avouched. (1) This supply is very *comprehensive*; it includes at once all that is requisite for nourishment, for refreshment, and for ornament—corn, wine, and oil. (2) It is very *satisfactory*; for the supply, either from its abundance or the accompanying blessing, is fully adequate to the requirements of the case—they shall be satisfied therewith. Plenty of itself does not always produce satisfaction: the blessing of God is needed to make men content; hence "godliness with contentment is great gain." (3) It is very *comfortable*; for it comes in answer to prayer, and thus brings with it a token of God's good pleasure. The promise is not introduced by "The Lord will say," but by "The Lord will answer and say," clearly connecting it with the prayers of his people, and evidencing at the same time his love to and interest in them. (4) It is very *observable*; attention is drawn to it by a "Behold." God will have his people to take notice of his hand in the mercies he bestows, and to mark the contrast in their condition which his merciful interposition brings about. The hand that smote them now salves their wounds; they had suffered from distress and want, now they are blessed with plenty. 3. The *rolling away of their reproach* is an additional blessing. The heathen had exulted over them in the day of their calamity; their reputation had suffered by the visible marks of the Divine

displeasure upon them, from which the inference had been either that they had forsaken God, or that he had forgotten them; and that there had been unfaithfulness on his side or on theirs, or on both. Now, however, they have returned to him in penitence, and he has received them in mercy; and thus their reproach is rolled away, and their reputation retrieved. 4. *The removal of all cause of fear.* The promise of plenty is backed by the assurance that the power which plagued them is doomed to destruction. The invading army that had destroyed so much is now in turn to be dispersed and defeated. (1) They had made a fruitful land barren and desolate, and now they are to be driven away into a land barren and desolate, there to perish for ever. (2) They had been the rod in God's hand for the punishment of a sinful people; and now that that rod has done its work, it is broken in pieces and flung away. Nothing is left of those pestilent swarms save the stench of their putrefying carcasses; so with those wicked instruments which a wise Providence sometimes employs for the chastisement of his disobedient children, nought shall remain of them except the ill odour of their memory. (3) The relief is complete. "When an affliction," it has been observed, "has done its work, it shall be removed in mercy, as the locusts of Canaan were from a penitent people, not as the locusts of Egypt were removed in wrath from an impenitent prince, only to make room for another plague." They had done great things to the detriment of God's people, and dealt much mischief to their possessions and property; now God does yet greater things for the benefit of his people, and in the destruction of their enemies.

Vers. 21—27.—*Loss repaired.* These verses contain an amplification of the preceding promises by way of stronger assurance and greater comfort to his people. There is also an application of the same, in which, by a bold but beautiful personification, the land itself, beasts of the field, as well as the children of Zion, are called to joy and gladness.

I. REJOICINGS ENJOINED. 1. The *call* to joy is addressed to things animate and inanimate, to animals rational and irrational; while the expression for joyfulness is suitably and sufficiently raised. Negatively, it is the absence of fear; positively, it is gladness and exultation. 2. The *contrast* is also very expressive. When the plague of locusts was approaching or had actually arrived, the land mourned; now it is called on not only to lay aside fear and divest itself of all apprehension, but to leap for joy and rejoice.

II. REASONS ASSIGNED. In each case the cause of rejoicing is subjoined. 1. First comes the general statement, "For the Lord will do great things;" more correctly, "hath done great things." He had done great things and terrible in chastising his erring children and punishing his enemies; but much greater things and more gracious he did when he repelled the invader and relieved his distressed people. Great things does God do in wrath, greater still in mercy.

"And though his arm be strong to smite,
'Tis stronger still to save."

2. The next reason assigned for rejoicing contains several particulars relating to the pasture-grounds and fruit trees. The pastures had been devoured as by fire; now they spring into new life, and are clothed with fresh young grass. The vine was dried up, the fig tree languished, the pomegranate, palm, and apple tree, yea, all the trees of the field, were withered; now they yield their strength, and are become vigorous and fruitful. When a man's ways please the Lord, his enemies are at peace with him, and the very stones of the field are in league with him; in like manner, when God is at peace with his people and they with him, through mutual reconciliation cemented by the blood of the cross, all the creatures of God are their servants. 3. The third reason assigned is the gift of rain, suitable and seasonable—the former rain and the latter rain, with the necessary results, namely, floors full of wheat, and vats overflowing with wine and oil. Pusey follows those who understand *moreh* in the sense of "teacher," as the Targum, which renders the clause, "Has restored to you your instructor [or, 'instructors'] in righteousness;" and the Vulgate, "Teacher of righteousness;" the Septuagint, followed by the Syriac and the Arabic, "The foods unto righteousness." His comment is, "It seems most probable that

the prophet prefixes to all the other promises that first all-containing promise of the coming of Christ. Such is the wont of the prophets, to go on from past judgments and deliverances to him who is the Centre of all this cycle of God's dispensations, the Son manifest in the flesh. . . . Him Joel speaks of as the Subject of rejoicing: 'Exult and joy in the Lord thy God; for he giveth [or, 'will give'] thee the Teacher unto righteousness,' *i.e.* the result and object of whose coming is righteousness." He further adds, "The early and latter rain, coming respectively at the seed-time and the harvest, represent the beginning and the completion; and so, by the analogy of earthly and spiritual sowing, growth, and ripeness, they represent preventing and perfecting grace; the inspiration of good purposes and the gift of final perseverance, which brings the just to glory consummated; the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and the going on unto perfection."

III. REPARATION FOR YEARS OF LOSS. 1. Sin had been the cause of Israel's calamity; the instruments that brought about the calamity were commissioned by God, and therefore called his great army. Small and insignificant as the individuals composing that army were, by their multitude they became great, and by the Divine commission they became mighty. The loss inflicted was consequently great. It had continued for several successive years, the change in the order of these instruments of destruction implying, according to some, not the order of attack, but the successiveness of the inroads made, and that for year after year. 2. The losses sustained are now to be repaired, such is the graciousness of God's dealings with his people when penitent. Years of plenty are to succeed the years of famine, and the losses of the latter are to be counterbalanced by the abundance of the former. It is no unusual thing with God to restore double, even as he promises, saying, "Even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee." Thus he did with Job; the Lord gave the patriarch twice as much as he had before, and blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning. Men's sins deserve all the chastisement that comes upon them; it is not because of man's merit, but in virtue of God's great goodness, that any compensation whatever is made them. 3. Thus it is with afflictions in general when we have the sanctified use of them. In such a case we are gainers, not losers, by affliction. When we return to him by means of repentance, he returns to us in the way of restitution. He repents him concerning his servants; he makes them glad according to the days wherein he has afflicted them, and the years wherein they have seen evil.

IV. RETURN OF PRAISE TO GOD FOR HIS GOODNESS. 1. God's goodness takes visible shape when he bestows the great abundance of good things promised to his people; that goodness is greatly enhanced when the sufficiency of food and of temporal good things is accompanied with satisfaction. Men sometimes have a sufficiency and eat, but are not satisfied; again they eat, and are satisfied, but forget their Benefactor, and fail to thank him for his bounties. 2. The return which God expects, and man is bound to make, is praise to the Name of the Lord. This return of praise includes several items here clearly expressed or implied. There is (1) an acknowledgment of the *privilege* of having the Lord for our God in covenant—a covenant well ordered in all things and sure; there is (2) an acknowledgment of his *providence* in so wondrously dealing with us; there must be (3) an acknowledgment of the *performance* of his promises, so his people who trust in him have no reason to be ashamed, and are never put to shame; there must be, moreover, (4) an acknowledgment of his *presence* in the midst of his people, to provide for, protect, and preserve his people; there must, in addition to all this, be (5) an acknowledgment of the *peculiarity* of his relation to us—the Lord our God, and none else, so that we have reason to rejoice, not only in the good things he gives us, but in the good hand that gives them, even the hand of a father who corrects us when we offend, and comforts us when we repent, and who intertwines our good, temporal and spiritual, with his own glory.

Vers. 28—32.—*The dispensation of the gospel.* The prophet had exhibited the wisdom and mercy of the Divine dispensations—God's pity for penitents, and the happiness of all who seek and serve him. "He will be jealous for them, and have compassion on them; he will plead their cause, avert his judgments, drive away their enemies, answer their prayers, and supply their wants; and the greatness of those things that have been done against them shall only enhance their gratitude for the still greater things

that he will do for them." Accordingly, he now passes from temporal benefits to spiritual blessings.

1. *THE DISPENSATION OF THE GOSPEL IS A SPIRITUAL DISPENSATION.* To a sorely chastened people such temporal mercies as are promised in the preceding verses must have been very delightful, and the great change of their condition consequent on repentance must have been as marvellous as it was merciful. But the prophet, looking away forward into the future, foretells the coming of a far more eventful era—an era marked by the bestowal of far richer and more abundant blessings. 1. *The period referred to* was to be subsequent to the calamities already endured, and the comforting compensations that followed. Long after the storm of adversity then present would be overpast, and after the state of peace and prosperity that would succeed, there would come a time of unparalleled blessing. The fulfilment of this prophecy began at the Day of Pentecost. 2. *The plenitude of blessing.* Then the droppings of the Spirit, that had been vouchsafed to patriarchs and prophets and the people of God under the old economy, would give place to a downpouring of the Spirit without stint and without restriction. This outpouring of the Spirit, in his gifts and graces and consolations, would extend to all nationalities, Gentile as well as Jew; and to both sexes, daughters and sons alike; and to all ages, both young and old; and to all classes, bond as well as free, servants and handmaids together. Not to the seed of Abraham, nor to the land of Israel, would the blessing be confined, but all flesh would be permitted to see the glory of the Lord, and the inhabitants of all lands would be privileged to come and worship before him. Peter himself scarcely comprehended the full extent of the blessing until he was specially commissioned to open the door of faith to the Gentiles. 3. *Particular instances of the fulfilment present themselves*—in the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Gentile Cornelius, the Roman centurion, and his friends; in the prophesying of the four daughters of Philip the evangelist, as in that of Agabus; in the vision of Peter in Joppa, and in that of Cornelius in Cæsarea some short space previously, as also in those wonderful visions and revelations vouchsafed to Paul when he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words. 4. *Prolongation of the blessing.* If we consider the effects produced, we shall find that the blessing did not cease at the Day of Pentecost. By the outpouring of the Spirit, no doubt, apostles and evangelists received such discoveries of Divine things as fully fitted them for writing the New Testament Scriptures, for declaring things secret, distant, and future, for founding the Christian Church, and ordering all things aright therein. These extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were confined to apostolic times, and in part to sub-apostolic times, and perhaps a generation after; but the ordinary operations and influences of the Spirit have never ceased from then till now. The extraordinary manifestations of the Divine will produced by the outpouring of the Spirit were only a partial accomplishment of the promise, and meant as a means for the full accomplishment of the same. Besides, it was not intended that all who receive the Spirit, and thereby learn the mysteries of the gospel and attain to the knowledge of salvation, should assume the power of prophesying, or exercise the function of the gospel ministry; for Paul, speaking of spiritual gifts, says, in relation to persons possessing such gifts, "Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers?" Nor are the revelations vouchsafed something without the Word of God, or beside it, or any way independent of it; for in the most solemn and signal fulfilment of this promise, when the Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, Peter all along appeals to Scripture, and directs his audience thereto in order to justify the change wrought on them, and vindicate the doctrines he addressed to them. By "prophecy" and "visions" and "dreams," we may understand the prophet as speaking of "gospel times and mercies, in terms borrowed from the times of the Old Testament; and the meaning is that, as of old, the excellent way and measure of the knowledge of God was by prophecy, vision, and dreams (Numb. xii. 6); so, under the New Testament, beside what was extraordinary, all who get the Spirit of God may, for knowing the mysteries of salvation, be compared with these ancient prophets. And as of old, by these ways of manifestation, men attained to the knowledge of the mysteries of God, so should they by the Spirit of God in the use of ordinary means." 5. *Perfect fulfilment of the promise.* Wonderful as the Pentecostal period was for the outpouring of the Spirit in such power and plenty, and superior in energy and extent as the Divine influences then were to those

enjoyed during the ages that had preceded, yet they were but droppings to the full flood of gospel light and gospel holiness that shall bless our earth in the glory of the latter day, when all that "see the light or feel the sun" shall know the Lord, and walk before him in the beauty of holiness. Thus the blessing commenced at Pentecost, continuing ever since, shall be consummated in that day when "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea."

II. DAYS OF TRIAL FREQUENTLY FOLLOW TIMES OF SPIRITUAL BLESSING. The people had experienced a merciful relief after the plague of locusts or prostration of their enemies; but they are warned against carnal security, or the vain supposition that all troubles shall be for ever henceforth banished from their borders. 1. Even after the great outpouring of the Spirit in Messianic times, and specially on the Day of Pentecost, there would be great *commotions* and terrible convulsions. These took place, as we know, before the dreadful day of the destruction of Jerusalem; and similar catastrophes, whether literal or figurative, shall occur before the still greater and more terrible day of the second coming of Christ to judgment. Through all the interval, times of special spiritual blessing have been in the past, and shall be in the future, followed by severe testing-times; "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" shall not exempt us from such; even God's own dear children are not to look for a continuance of halcyon days on earth. 2. Many *causes* contribute to this. After a time of reformation, or religious revival and refreshing, Satan will seek to sift them like wheat, and stir up all his rage against them. Opposed to the progress of the truth, he will array all the power he possesses and all the agents he can command against the Church. God himself will permit such a winnowing-time as will separate the wheat from the chaff, try the faith, and prove the graces of his people. We never know our real strength or points of weakness till the day of trial comes. But God will also manifest the greatness of his displeasure against sin by humbling on the one hand those who, during a time of rich spiritual blessing, refuse the offers of his grace and resist his Spirit, and by punishing on the other hand all the enemies, public or secret, of himself and of his people. 3. The *coming* of Christ to judgment. Whether the wonders in the heaven and in the earth, blood and fire, and pillars of smoke, with eclipses of the sun and moon, be understood literally of the precursors and presages of on-coming calamities, or figuratively of the calamities and catastrophes themselves, the second coming of the Lord at the general judgment, of which his coming to the destruction of Jerusalem was a sort of dim foreshadow, shall abound with comfort to the saint, as it shall be fraught with terror to the sinner. To the one his coming shall be a day greatly desired, to the other it shall be a day of distress and despair; for while he shall come to take vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel of his grace, he will come to be glorified in the saints, and admired in all them that believe.

III. DELIVERANCE FOR THE SERVANTS OF GOD. 1. The *persons* delivered are (1) those who call upon the Name of the Lord. These are the worshippers of God, who worship him in private as well as in public, with heart as well as head, and the confession of whose lips echoes the confidence of the heart. "This calling on God supposes knowledge of him, faith in him, desire towards him, dependence on him, and, as an evidence of the sincerity of all this, a conscientious obedience to him; for without that, crying, 'Lord, Lord,' will not stand us in any stead." (2) They are described as "called of God," "effectually called"—called not only by the common and ordinary call of the gospel, but called specially into fellowship with God, Father, Son, and Spirit. Such are effectually called "from sin to God, from self to Christ, from things below to things above." The apostle explains the first characteristic as pertaining to the Gentiles; the second, some restrict to the Jews. We had better refer both to the saints of God, whether Gentile or Jew. (3) The persons spoken of in this Scripture are further particularized as persons *escaped* from destruction, and as a *remnant* left after some fierce fight or terrible judgment. The expression "remnant," so often used by the prophets, originally referred to those captives who had survived their brethren who had died in exile, or who formed a contrast to the dwellers in Jerusalem; subsequently the expression contained the germ of the New Testament "election of grace." This remnant is composed, not only of the small number of Jews that believed in Christ at his first coming, but of "the little flock" (Jew and Gentile) to whom God gives the kingdom; the "few that enter in at the strait gate;" the "little city" and few men

in it, delivered by "the poor wise man." 2. The *place* of deliverance. This was Mount Zion and Jerusalem literally, but in a very limited sense, if the reference be to those who escaped from the miseries and calamities of the final and fearful siege of the holy city, as also from its ruin and destruction; such as believed in Christ and were in the city having escaped to Pella, and thus survived the common calamity. It is rather Zion and Jerusalem in the spiritual sense of the Church of Christ where the Deliverer is found, whence salvation proceeds, or rather where, according to the alternative rendering, the delivered, or such as have escaped, are found. 3. The *privileges* of such are manifold. They have experienced tokens of God's love upon them, teachings of God's Spirit within them, the usefulness of God's Word and ordinances to them; they are favoured with a spiritual frame of soul, and spread the savour of godliness around them.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—"*Sound an alarm!*" The trumpet-call was used among the Israelites both in their religious solemnities and in the conduct of war. The direction here given is that a summons should be addressed to the nation, calling upon all classes to give heed to the presence of the Lord, and to learn the lessons taught by his awful judgments. We are thus taught that the silver sound of the gospel trumpet is not the only note that reaches our human race; there is also the loud call, the startling alarm, which is especially intended for sinful and inattentive man.

I. SIN AND FALSE SECURITY ARE OFTEN ASSOCIATED. The tempter not only leads men into sin; he persuades them that sin will have no evil consequences. The voice of conscience is silenced; the solemn assurance of Scripture is disregarded or disbelieved. Men sin without foreboding and without fear.

II. HENCE THE NEED OF A SOLEMN AND FAITHFUL NOTE OF ALARM AND WARNING. Ezekiel was taught that one especial function of the prophet is to give the people warning. The watchman who sees the approach of danger is bound to blow the trumpet, that they may not be surprised and taken unawares. Those who are entrusted with a message from God to their fellow-men are directed, whether men hear or forbear, to deal faithfully with souls.

III. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF GIVING HEED TO THE ALARM RESTS WITH THOSE WHO ARE WARNED. The warning may be disregarded, the penalty may be incurred, the judgment may be experienced. Or, on the other hand, the alarm may not be sounded in vain. Repentance may prove its reality by sincere resolutions and prayers, and a new heart may produce a new life. Then not only does the prophet deliver his soul; the sinner finds acceptance and salvation.—T.

Ver. 11.—"*Who can abide it?*" It is the day of the Lord to which the prophet here refers; the day when the Lord visits the earth, examines his people, inquires into their conduct, and especially into the manner in which they have dealt with his messengers and their message. Then a test shall be applied to the inmost nature, and to the outward life of men; and it is a serious inquiry, "Who can abide it?"

I. NONE CAN RESIST THE OMNIPOTENCE OF THE DIVINE JUDGE.

II. NONE CAN ELUDE HIS OMNISCIENT SCRUTINY INTO THE HEARTS AND LIVES OF MEN.

III. NONE CAN QUESTION THE PRINCIPLES OF JUSTICE UPON WHICH HE PROCEEDS.

IV. NONE CAN SHOW CONFORMITY TO THE STANDARD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH HE APPLIES.

V. NONE CAN EVADE THE AUTHORITATIVE SENTENCE WHICH HE PRONOUNCES.

APPLICATION. If none can abide the judgment of the future, it will be wise *now* to seek by repentance and faith reconciliation and acceptance. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way."—T.

Ver. 12.—*Conversion.* God is not satisfied to utter threatenings and to foretell evil. It is truly characteristic of him that he adds words of gracious entreaty, expostulation, and counsel. He would be deserving of our adoring gratitude did he merely express

his willingness to receive the returning sinner; but in this passage he deigns to invite and beseech those who have rebelled and who are in danger of perdition, that they convert and repent.

I. WHO ARE THEY WHO ARE THUS ADMONISHED? They are such as have been highly favoured, and have nevertheless disobeyed the Father who has cared for them, rebelled against the King who has been gracious to them. Who amongst men must not be included in this class?

II. TO WHOM ARE THEY INSTRUCTED TO RETURN? "To me," saith the Lord. It is the offended One, who himself condescends to invite transgressors to reverse their steps, to renounce their disobedience, to cleave unto himself. This is a miracle of grace.

III. WHAT KIND OF CONVERSION DOES GOD REQUIRE? In this passage we have as clear a statement as even the New Testament can supply of the spirituality of true religion. God does not ask for verbal, formal submission; he asks for the return of the heart. Here is involved true penitence—heart-sorrow for sin. Here is involved true faith—heart-attachment to God. The heart is emphatically God's, and it is the heart he asks.

IV. WHAT TOKENS OF SINCERITY IN CONVERSION DOES GOD EXPECT? The true conversion is within; but there will be appropriate evidences that sin is loathed and forsaken. For this purpose the tears and mourning, etc., here described, are to be desired by God and presented by man.—T.

Ver. 13.—*Spiritual repentance.* Throughout the Scriptures the one indispensable condition of man's forgiveness and of his acceptance with God, which is insisted upon by all inspired writers, is repentance. It is, therefore, of great importance to have a right view of this exercise or posture of the soul.

I. TRUE REPENTANCE DOES NOT CONSIST IN ANY EXTERNAL, CEREMONIAL OBSERVANCE. In the East especially it has always been common to practise rites of a symbolical character in connection with the religious life. Sorrow and penitence are expressed by the rending of the garments. Now, it is in accordance with human nature that the sign should be substituted for the thing signified, the outward observance and ceremony for the feeling. It is an evidence of the divinity and spirituality of the religion of the Old Testament that, in this as in other passages, the mere symbol should be disparaged in comparison with the emotion which it represents.

II. TRUE AND ACCEPTABLE REPENTANCE IS SPIRITUAL. 1. Its seat is the heart. A broken and a contrite heart will not be despised by him who cares nothing for rent garments, for sackcloth and ashes, for loud and repeated lamentations. 2. Its essence is turning unto the Lord, i.e. away from sin and away from self, to him against whom the sinner has offended, and by whom alone the sinner can be justified.

III. TRUE REPENTANCE IS PROMPTED BY JUST THOUGHTS OF GOD AS MERCIFUL AND FORGIVING. 1. In disposition (if language so human may be allowed concerning the Supreme) God is gracious, merciful, forbearing. If his only principle of government had been the strict retribution which some have attributed to him, there would be no encouragement to the sinner to repent of sins which could never be forgiven. 2. In his treatment of men, God is characterized by great kindness, such as our poor, stricken, clinging hearts especially need and crave for. 3. In regard to threats and promises, God makes himself known as repenting of the evil. The threat of punishment is not idle. But the revelation of mercy, the promise of grace, is far deeper than all threatening. Denunciations of wrath are for the impenitent and unbelieving; but when sinners repent of their sin, God repents of his purpose to destroy.—T.

Ver. 14.—*The hope of reconciliation.* This language is figurative, and may be deemed by some open to the charge of anthropomorphism. Yet it is very simple, very natural, and very expressive. God is represented as a king and warrior, who has been offended by his subjects, and who has come down from his palace at the head of his army, to chastise the rebellious; but who has been met with the language of submission and supplication, and whose wrath is averted, so that it is hoped that, instead of punishing he may show mercy, and may return to his palace, leaving behind him some tokens of his favour and forgiveness.

I. WHEN MEN THINK OF THEIR OWN ILL DESERTS, THEY MAY WELL FEAR THE CONSEQUENCES OF GOD'S NOTICE AND ACTION.

II. BUT WHEN THEY THINK OF GOD'S CHARACTER AND PROMISES, THEY MAY WELL CHERISH THE HOPE THAT HE WILL HAVE MERCY UPON THEM.

III. WHEN FAITHFUL AND REPENTANT, MEN MAY LOOK, NOT MERELY FOR THE REMISSION OF JUSTLY THREATENED PENALTIES, BUT FOR THE ENJOYMENT OF UNDESERVED BLESSINGS.

APPLICATION. If we were to think chiefly of our own sins and unworthiness, the utmost that we could do would be to cherish some faint hope that mercy might be extended to us. Those untaught by revelation, if they have any sense of their sinfulness, cannot go beyond this: "Who can tell if he will repent?" But those who are in possession of the glad tidings which are by Jesus Christ will be guilty of distrusting and dishonouring God, if this be their mental attitude. They have the express assurances of "him who cannot lie," and who has promised that the penitent and believing sinner shall be pardoned, and put into the enjoyment of all spiritual blessings. They are not, therefore, at liberty to doubt, but are bound to credit and to act upon the revelation of a faithful and merciful God.—T.

Ver. 16.—*Elders and children.* The occasion is serious. National disaster seems imminent. What shall be done to turn away Divine anger? Let the people be summoned to meet in solemn assembly, and by fasts and prayers let them address themselves to the Divine compassion. And that it may be a truly national and popular act of religion, let no class, no sex, no age, be omitted from the summons, or exempted from the exercises of devotion and intercession. Thus elders and children are, upon Divine authority, associated in holy services.

I. OLD AND YOUNG ARE ALIKE PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE BOUNTY, ALIKE OBJECTS OF DIVINE CARE.

II. OLD AND YOUNG ARE ALIKE POSSESSED OF SPIRITUAL CAPACITIES AND FACULTIES. It is sometimes taken for granted that children, because of imperfect knowledge and undeveloped intellect, are incapable of any serious part in the religious exercises of the Church. But intelligence is relative. Is not the "grey barbarian lower than the Christian child"? Is not the full-grown man but a babe when compared with heavenly intelligences? Faith is often stronger and prayer is often more genuine in the child than in the adult.

III. OLD AND YOUNG ARE ALIKE NECESSARY TO THE COMPLETENESS OF SOCIAL LIFE. It has often and justly been said, that a community without children would be scarcely human. Providence has so ordered society that those of all ages should live together in mutual intercourse. And no religion can afford to leave out of sight those who are growing up to be the men and women of the next generation. It would indeed be unwise, even ruinous, to so adapt the language and the thoughts in prayer, praise, or meditation to the capacities of the young, as to estrange the mature and intellectual from the services of the Church. Yet there must be milk for babes, as well as meat for strong men. The admonition of the text should reach the ears especially of Christian ministers, "Gather the children."—T.

Ver. 17.—*Priestly entreaty.* The priests of the old covenant occupied a position, relatively to religion and to the Church, very different from that occupied by Christian ministers of any special order. Their office was partly fulfilled and superseded by the ministrations of "the great High Priest of our profession," and partly taken up by the whole body of the faithful, who are "priests unto God."

I. THE PRIESTLY OFFICE. Priests were: 1. Ministers of the Lord, appointed by him to serve in the offices of religion. 2. Representatives of the people, from amongst whom they were selected by Divine wisdom. 3. Mediators between the laity whom they represented, and the Eternal whom they served in his temple.

II. THE PRIESTLY GRIEF. In time of calamity it was the function of the priests to mourn. They were men, and representative men. They were touched with a feeling of the people's infirmities. They bore the burden of the nation on their hearts. Between the porch and the altar, it was their sacred function, clad in dark sackcloth, to lift up their voices and to weep.

III. THE PRIESTLY ENTREATY. The simple and touching language, in which the Hebrew priests appealed on behalf of the nation to the mercy of high Heaven, has passed into the Litany of the Christian Church. The supplication for pity and deliverance is urged by the united appeal of the holy assembly in the words, "Spare us, good Lord!"

IV. THE PRIESTLY PLEA. The text does not urge the necessities and sorrows of the people as a motive for Divine interposition, so much as the reputation, the honour, of the God of Israel. If God's chosen people perish, then Jehovah will no longer be worshipped, and the heathen will triumph over the downfall of the true faith. This lesson we may learn from this plea, that to a rightly judging mind the glory of God himself is the highest, noblest aim that can be sought and striven and prayed for.—T.

Vers. 18—20.—Pity and relenting. The transitions of sentiment with which we meet in the Hebrew prophets are remarkable, but not unaccountable. Threats and promises on God's part, rebellion and penitence on man's part, succeed one another with great rapidity. Yet there is order and method in these changes, which are always dependent upon moral and spiritual relations, and are never arbitrary and capricious.

I. THE OCCASION OF DIVINE RELENTING. The deep-seated cause is to be found in the character, the moral nature, of God himself. He is merciful, and delights in mercy. Yet this attribute can be exercised only upon certain conditions, only towards those in a certain attitude of heart. Penitence, humiliation, contrition, entreaty, on the part of Judah, account for the exercise of compassion on the part of God.

II. DIVINE RELENTING LEADS TO THE REMOVAL OF GRIEVOUS EVILS. The northern army of locusts, and perhaps also a hostile force figured by it, should be driven away, and famine and pestilence averted. The penalties of sin, being intended mainly for the correction of offenders, are not retained when their purpose is accomplished. In the midst of wrath God remembers mercy.

III. DIVINE RELENTING PROVES ITSELF BY AN ABUNDANT BENEFICENCE. The Jews were assured that, as a sign that the storm-cloud of wrath was overpast, they should again enjoy the fruits of the earth—"corn, wine, and oil." Those whom God pardons he blesses too; he takes away the wrath to bestow the loving-kindness; the load of trouble is cast into the sea, and "he loadeth with benefits."—T.

Vers. 21, 22.—Joy after sorrow. In highly figurative language the prophet apostrophizes the very soil of Judah, the very cattle of the field. By poetic imagining he transfers the joy of the people to the objects, inanimate and animate, by which they are surrounded. General mercies awaken general joy.

I. THE FAVOUR OF GOD BANISHES FEAR. If natural calamities have power to excite alarm and foreboding, much more is this the case with the displeasure of the Ruler and Judge of all. Men do indeed adopt various devices to silence the voice of fear, to persuade themselves that all will be well with them. But there is no true remedy for painful foreboding except the assurance of Divine reconciliation and acceptance.

II. THE FAVOUR OF GOD CREATES GLADNESS. When the locusts were swept away, the scourge removed, and when the earth resumed its garb of fertility and uttered its promises of fruitfulness, a universal rejoicing took the place of mourning, distress, and alarm. And in the spiritual realm, when the grace and love of God are realized, it is felt that the blessing of God maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow. And the inspired admonitions are felt to be congenial: "Rejoice in the Lord alway;" "Rejoice evermore."—T.

Ver. 23.—Showers of blessing. In Palestine the hopes of the people for an abundant harvest were always connected with the appointed seasons of refreshing and vivifying rain. This is in Scripture an emblem of spiritual effusions enriching and fertilizing the Church of God.

I. SHOWERS OF BLESSING COME FROM ABOVE.

II. SHOWERS OF BLESSING FALL IN THEIR APPOINTED SEASON.

III. SHOWERS OF BLESSING RESPOND TO THE FAITH AND ENTREATIES OF GOD'S HERITAGE.

IV. SHOWERS OF BLESSING CREATE FERTILITY AND ABUNDANCE.

V. SHOWERS OF BLESSING AWAKEN THE VOICE, THE SONG, OF THANKSGIVING AND OF JOY.

APPLICATION. There is nothing arbitrary in the bestowal of spiritual blessing. The dew and rains from heaven are bestowed in accordance with Divine wisdom. And spiritual mercies are assured in response to faith and prayer. And God has said, "Prove me now, and see if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing."—T.

Ver. 27.—*The God of Israel.* No doubt the less enlightened among the Jews may have cherished superstitious views regarding Jehovah, and have regarded him as their tutelary Deity, just as neighbouring nations thought of Baal or Ashtoreth. But the devout and intelligent believed both in the universal Lordship of Jehovah, and in his special interest in and care for his chosen nation Israel. Thus we, as Christians, holding the Supreme to be God over all the earth, yet consider him to be in a very special sense the God of his own Church, purchased with the precious blood of his Son.

I. THE EVIDENCE WHICH CONVINCES US THAT THE LORD IS OUR GOD. 1. As in the case of Israel, so in our case, God is known by his delivering mercy. He who saved the Jews from locusts and from armice, delivers us from the bondage of sin and death. 2. And, as Jehovah crowned the national life of Israel with plenty and prosperity, so has he made all provision for our spiritual well-being and happiness, in the gift of his Son and in the dispensation of his Spirit.

II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR CONVICTION THAT THE LORD IS OUR GOD. "My people," says the Lord, "shall never be ashamed;" i.e. because: 1. They shall never be disregarded; their prayers shall always be heard with favour. 2. They shall never be disappointed; the expectations which the Lord awakens he will fulfil. 3. They shall never be forsaken; for he says, "I will never leave thee."—T.

Vers. 28, 29.—*The outpouring of the Spirit.* We have the authority of St. Peter for applying this prediction to the Messianic dispensation. Joel's mind was lifted up by the happy prospect in the immediate future for his countrymen, and, as was so often the case, his prophetic gaze pierced the dense mists of futurity, and he beheld "the wonder that should be."

I. THE PERIOD OF THE GIFT. It is not intended to teach that the bestowal of the Holy Spirit was deferred, and reserved for the Messianic age. Yet no believer in the New Testament can doubt that the Day of Pentecost witnessed an unprecedented outpouring of Divine energy and grace, in itself the herald and the promise of a constant perennial effusion of blessing upon all the Church of the ascended Redeemer.

II. THE NATURE OF THE GIFT. It was an invisible, impalpable grace; its operation took place in spiritual natures. The Spirit of God bestowed those special gifts of inspiration, of faith, of healings, of tongues, which were peculiar to the first age of the Church. The same Spirit conferred the gifts of teaching and administration, which have tended to the edification and increase of the body of Christ. But the choicest and richest of spiritual gifts have ever been those of character and principle, of disposition and habit, which have made the Church the true representative upon earth of its ascended Lord. Of these gifts the chief is love.

III. THE ABUNDANCE OF THE GIFT. The promise is not of scanty drops, but of copious showers. The great Giver delights to give generously, royally, gloriously.

IV. THE RECIPIENTS OF THE GIFTS. The most marvellous part of this magnificent prophecy is the language in which is described the comprehensiveness of the Church of the Lord Jesus. 1. Among these recipients of spiritual grace are men and women. "Your sons and your daughters." In Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female. 2. Old and young are alike included among the seers of visions and the dreamers of dreams; for upon every enlightened soul shall stream the light which is not of this world, and which reveals eternal realities. 3. Upon bond and upon free the graces of the Spirit are shed without distinction. Servants and handmaids are participators in the Spirit; for all are free in Christ Jesus. 4. To make this universality explicit, it is expressly said that the outpouring shall be upon "all flesh," i.e. upon all humanity. Beyond a prospect like this, the vision of inspired prophets could not extend; the grace of the infinite Giver could not be vaster and more comprehensive.—T.

Ver. 32.—*The promise of salvation.* As the preceding passage is claimed by St. Peter in the Acts, so this is claimed by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, as referring to the dispensation of the Messiah. The declaration of Joel is descriptive of the gospel—the glad tidings of salvation adapted and published to all mankind. Observe—

I. IN WHAT THE DELIVERANCE CONSISTS. Not in exemption or release from temporal calamity or disaster; but in spiritual rescue and emancipation—salvation from sin, its bondage and its penalty.

II. UPON WHAT CONDITION THE DELIVERANCE IS PROFFERED AND PROMISED. Calling upon the Name of the Lord involves: 1. A sense of personal need and danger. 2. A conviction of the power of God to save. 3. Faith in his declared willingness to be the Deliverer of his people. 4. The cry of the heart to God the Saviour.

III. TO WHOM THE PROMISE OF DELIVERANCE IS ADDRESSED. "Whoever" is a wide, all-embracing term, comprehending not only every class of society, but every nation, and every grade of character. St. Paul himself scarcely went beyond this, when he said that "God is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe."—T.

Vers. 28, 29.—*The outpouring of the Holy Spirit.* These words were to have their fulfilment after the purpose expressed in the twenty-third verse had been accomplished. The marginal translation there is the more correct. Joel called upon the children of Zion to rejoice in the Lord, because he was about to send "a Teacher of righteousness." This was he of whom Nicodemus, the ruler of the Jews, said, "We know that thou art a Teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles which thou doest, except God be with him." We must look, therefore, for the fulfilment of the prophecy in our text after the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. Peter was right in recognizing it in the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Church at Pentecost (Acts ii. 16—21). But the baptism of the Spirit is recurrent. The Church has known many a Pentecost. It is within our reach now, and we all sorely need it.

I. THE EFFECTS OF THE EFFUSION OF THE HOLY GHOST may be briefly suggested, so far as they are alluded to in our text. Amongst them may be mentioned the following. 1. *Belief in the supernatural.* "Visions" and "dreams" were the means of Divine revelation. We read of them in the history of Joseph, Daniel, Ezekiel, and others, mentioned in the Old Testament. Under the new dispensation Peter had visions of angels; Paul saw the angel of the Lord more than once; Stephen beheld Jesus standing at the right hand of God; John gazed on the glories of the New Jerusalem, and rejoiced in visions of his Lord. If such special manifestations are no longer given, spiritual realities around us are not the less confidently believed in by men baptized with the Holy Ghost. What are laughed at by the world as dreams and visions are actual truths and obvious phenomena in Christian experience. Spiritual truths are spiritually discerned. 2. *Fearless enunciation of Divine truth.* "Prophecy" is used in two senses in Scripture. As the faculty of foretelling future events, it was prevalent in the Christian Church. Agabus, and the daughters of Philip the evangelist, were not alone in their gifts. Even now coming events cast their shadows before on the sensitive souls of believers, whose answered prayers are the beginnings of the Divine purposes. But if we take the phrase in its more ordinary acceptation, there can be no doubt that the baptism of the Spirit gives courage and power for utterance of Divine truth. This the apostles realized. Feeble and trembling before Pentecost, they shook the world by their bold preaching after it. 3. *The extension of the covenant.* "I will pour out my Spirit upon *all flesh*" can only mean the inclusion of the Gentiles in the covenant blessings. And it was the fact that to them also was given the Holy Ghost, which broke down the prejudices of the apostles and led them to the inclusion of these in the Christian Church. God put no difference between Jew and Gentile, nor does he now. 4. *The exaltation of the lowliest.* The "servants" and the "handmaids," in other words, the male and female slaves, were not to be excluded. God was no respecter of persons. Onesimus, the fugitive slave, was as true a convert as his master, Philemon.

II. THE ATTITUDE OF SOUL NECESSARY TO THE RECEPTION OF THIS BLESSING. This we may learn from a comparison of the passage with the actual experience of the apostles. 1. *The Church should feel profoundly convinced of her weakness.* As

afflictions brought down the Jews, so the departure of their Lord saddened and disheartened the apostles. They had no strength, and they knew it. Therefore they could only tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." "My strength is made perfect in weakness." 2. *The Church should cherish strong confidence in the power of God.* All that puts natural causes in the place of the Divine energy which is in them, weakens this faith. As the earth is dependent on the rains, and "lives because heaven weeps over it," so is the Church dependent on the outpouring of the Spirit from on high. According to our faith so it will be unto us. 3. *The Church must bestir herself to believing and importunate prayer.* Compare the Lord's parable of the importunate widow. Recall the promise, "Ask, and ye shall receive," etc. Above all, trust to this explicit declaration, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" —A. R.

Ver. 32.—*The call of the convicted.* The fulfilment of this prophecy took place on the Day of Pentecost. Then God poured out his Spirit from on high, and the despised disciples were inspired to speak, while multitudes were convinced of their sin against Messiah, and cried not in vain for mercy and salvation. Such results still follow the effusion of the Holy Spirit upon the Church in answer to the prayers of the faithful. We will consider the special effect alluded to in our text, namely, the cry of those convicted of sin.

I. *THE CONDITION OF THE CONTRITE.* They are in danger, or they would not require to be "delivered." Those who heard the apostles "were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" for they knew that they had sinned against God in the rejection of his Son. 1. *They were guilty of sin.* Who is not? Even children have evil tendencies which respond to temptation. The heart of a child is like a pool of water which seems perfectly clear, but let it be once stirred, and it is at once beclouded. Sin is a terrible thing. In Scripture it is spoken of as a *debt* we cannot pay, as a *burden* we cannot bear, as a *thief* who robs us, as a *leprosy* which corrupts us, and as a *poison* that ends in death. Sin has insulted God and robbed him of his children, and nailed the Lord Jesus Christ to the cross. But however widespread and deadly its influence, "whosoever shall call on the Name of the Lord shall be delivered." 2. *They were convicted of sin.* Unless they had been they would not have called upon God. It is not simply a knowledge that all men are sinners which is required, but a sense of our personal responsibility in regard to sin. There is a great difference between knowing that fire burns, and knowing that we are being burnt. 3. *They were convicted by the Holy Spirit.* Yet he is called "the Comforter." He is likened to the dove, to the breath which Jesus breathed, to the dew that lights upon the grass, and to the oil of joy. Nevertheless, it is his work to "convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of a judgment to come;" and in doing so he overwhelms sinners with a sense of shame and peril. But for this, there would be no cry and no deliverance. Pain is a necessary stage of cure in such a disease as sin. If a wound has been long neglected, the wise surgeon will take off all the coverings which have been wrapped over it in ignorance, and will give new agony for a time, if only he is able to get rid of the venom. But after that he will bind it up. So must the Holy Spirit wound before he heals. We must have the broken heart before God can bind it up. Conviction of sin shows that God has not given us up.

II. *THE CRY OF THE CONTRITE.* It has been said that we are not saved by prayer, but we cannot be saved without it. Prayer is the soul going to its refuge, or rather it is the soul laying hold on the hand that draws it into the refuge. 1. *Prayer is the ordinance of God.* It is as much a law as is the law of gravitation, and is proved by experiment, not by a *priori* argument as to its probability. True, God is our loving Father; but unless we arise and go to him as the prodigal did, we shall not have the welcome and the kiss, the robe and the music. 2. *Prayer implies faith and hope.* We must have faith in the character of God—in his "Name," to use the phrase in our text—that is, in what he has made known of himself. For example, he is revealed to us as the *Holy One*; so that we can only go to him when we are really wishing to,

forsake sin, to be helped out of it instead of being helped in it. He is *omniscient*; therefore thoroughness in confession is required, for he knows us so perfectly that we dare not dissemble, nor cloke our sins before him. And he is *almighty*—well able to give us the pardon and deliverance we need. His “name” is “*Jesus*,” for he shall save his people from their sins. Add to faith in his character faith in his *nearness*. It is useless to cry to one who is out of hearing. He is a God near, and not far off. 3. *Prayer may be a simple call*. It is a cry rather than a statement. The Pharisee told God much, but he did not pray. The publican smote upon his breast and cried for mercy; and God heard his prayer, and he went down to his house justified.

III. THE PROMISE TO THE CONTRITE. 1. *They shall be delivered*: (1) *From the forebodings of doom*. (2) *From the terrors of an awakened conscience*. (3) *From vain efforts at self-reform*. (4) *From the power and from the love of sin*. 2. *Deliverance will come through faith in the crucified Saviour*. To this the Jews were brought on the Day of Pentecost. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” 3. *Deliverance will follow on the cry for mercy*. All are encouraged to call upon the Lord—the *backslider*, the *uneducated*, the *child*, the *degraded* and *abandoned*. “As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.”—A. R.

Vers. 1—11.—*The ministry of alarm*. “Blow ye the trumpet in Zion,” etc. Zion was the meeting-place for the people of God, and may be fairly taken as a type of the true Church in all ages. We may take these verses as setting forth one aspect of the Church’s ministry, namely, the ministry of alarm.

I. IT HAS TO ANNOUNCE A JUDGMENT THAT IS TERRIBLE. How graphically and appallingly does the prophet set forth the tremendousness of the calamity that was about being inflicted on Judah! It was a day of “darkness and gloominess,” a day of “clouds” and of “thick darkness,” etc. We have here: 1. *The executors of the judgment*. Whom did the Almighty Governor of the world now employ to execute his judgments? The magnates of the earth, or the illustrious legions of heaven? No; *locusts*. He brings them out by millions, and marshals them as his battalions, to fight against sin and crush the sinner. So dense are their crowds, that they darken the sun and conceal the stars. So rapid their movement, and so closely do they jostle together, that their noise is like “the noise of chariots on the top of the mountains.” The sun-beam falleth on their glazed wings, so that they appear as a “fire that falleth before them, and behind them as a flame that burneth.” They move with such order and force that their appearance is like “horses” and “horsemen.” The meanest insect is God’s messenger; the little locust he employs as an officer of his justice. 2. *The effects of the judgment*. “The land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them as a desolate wilderness.” Note the power of combination. These little insects singly were comparatively powerless; in combination they moved with a resistless energy. Unity is strength. This terrible judgment, however, is but a faint shadow of that more terrible judgment that awaits this wicked world, “when the Son of man shall come in all his glory, with his holy angels,” etc. “I saw, and, behold, a great white throne,” etc.

II. IT HAD TO ANNOUNCE A JUDGMENT THAT WAS APPROACHING. “The day of the Lord cometh; it is nigh at hand.” This terrible army of insects was now in the course of formation, and was gathering together for the fearful work of destruction. The Church now has to give warning of a judgment that is coming. “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away,” etc. Yes, it is coming. Its dim rays of dawn are seen on the tops of the distant hills; the terrible sun will break forth in the heavens ere long: it will indeed be “the day of the Lord.” The Church’s work is to warn every man, to blow the trumpet of alarm, give it a blast that shall startle the thoughtless generation.—D. T.

Vers. 12, 13.—*Soul-reformation*. “Therefore also now,” etc. Observe here three things in relation to soul-reformation.

I. ITS PROCESS. Turning to the Lord. “Turn ye unto the Lord your God.” The unregenerate man is an alien from God. Like the prodigal son, he has left his Father’s house and gone into the “far country” of carnality and sin. Reform is turning and

directing his steps back to God. Soul-reformation is not turning from one doctrine, or Church, or habit to another, but turning to God, going back with all its deepest love to him. But in turning there is deep moral contrition; there is "fasting," and "weeping," and "mourning," and the "rending of the heart." Soul-reformation begins in genuine repentance for past sins. "Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight."

II. ITS URGENCY. "Therefore also now, saith the Lord." Yes, now is the time; there is nothing more urgent; everything must make way for this; until this is done, nothing is done properly. Now: 1. Because the work is of the most paramount importance. 2. Because the time for accomplishing it is very short. Whatever other work you adjourn to a future time, for your soul's sake adjourn not this for a single hour.

III. ITS ENCOURAGEMENT. "For he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil." The word *deprecate*th would be better than "repenteth." The inflicting of sufferings on his creatures is repugnant to his nature. "He desireth not the death of the sinner." What an encouragement it is to the sinner to turn to the Lord, to be assured that he will be welcomed with all the love and tender sympathy of an affectionate father!—D. T.

Vers. 15—17.—*An urgently demanded meeting.* "Blow the trumpet in Zion," etc. Men are constantly assembling themselves together for one purpose or another—political, commercial, scientific, entertaining. But of all the meetings, none are so urgent as the one indicated in the text.

I. IT IS A MEETING CALLED ON ACCOUNT OF COMMON SIN. All the people of Judah had sinned grievously, and they were now summoned together on that account. No subject is of such urgent importance as this. Sin, this was the root of all the miseries of their country. It behoved them to meet together in order to deliberate how best to tear up this upas, how best to dry up this pestiferous fountain of all their calamities.

II. IT IS A MEETING COMPOSED OF ALL CLASSES. The young and the old were there; the sad and the jubilant; even the bridal pair; the priests and the people. The subject concerned them all; all were vitally interested in it. Sin is no class subject. It concerns the man in imperial purple as well as the man in pauper's rags.

III. IT IS A MEETING FOR HUMILIATION AND PRAYER. "Let the priests and the ministers weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord!" It was not a meeting for debate or discussion, for mere social intercourse and entertainment; but for profound humiliation before God.

CONCLUSION. No meeting in England is more urgently demanded to-day than such a one as this.—D. T.

Vers. 18—24.—*Interaction of the Divine and human.* "Then will the Lord be jealous," etc. These verses refer to the removal both of the actual calamity under which the nation were suffering, namely, the plague of locusts, and also to the removal of that calamity which was to come upon them by the invasion of a foreign foe, namely, the Assyrians. The latter is evidently referred to in ver. 20: "I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things." Henderson implies that the passage in Zeph. ii. 13, "He will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness," is sufficient to prove that the term "northern" here refers to the Assyrian power. However, for homiletical purposes, it scarcely matters whether the locusts, Assyrians, or any other destructive enemy are referred to. The grand question is—What are the truths contained in the paragraph that are of universal importance and application? The following are clearly deducible.

1. THAT THE MATERIAL CONDITION OF A PEOPLE DEPENDS UPON THE DIVINE OPERATIONS. Two things are referred to in the passage as the works of the Almighty towards the Jewish people at this time. 1. *The withdrawal of calamities.* "I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate." When terrible calamities come upon a people, such as hosts of destructive

insects, or pestilence, famine, or war, who but the Almighty can remove them? Men may and ought to employ means; but futile for ever will be all human efforts without the co-operation of Almighty power. This fact should teach us ever to look to him and him only for deliverance from evil at all times, both material and moral. 2. *The bestowment of blessings.* "The Lord will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen." The productions of the earth are dependent every moment upon Almighty power. At his bidding the most fertile regions of nature are struck into barrenness, and deserts and wildernesses become fertile and beautiful as Eden. The pseudo-scientist of this age traces the operations of nature to what he calls "laws," a term to cover his ignorance. But true philosophy as well as the Bible teaches that nature is absolutely in God's hands. "He causes the sun to rise and to set." He poureth down the genial showers and scaleth the heavens. A practical recognition of him in all the phenomena of nature is what reason and religion demand. "Every good and perfect gift," etc.

II. THAT THE DIVINE OPERATIONS ARE INFLUENCED BY THE MORAL CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE. We are taught here, that the removal of the calamity and the bestowment of the blessing came upon the people in consequence of the moral humiliation for their sins, described in the preceding verses. The priests and the ministers of the Lord wept between the altar, and said, "Spare thy people, O Lord!" etc. "The porch before the temple was a hundred and twenty cubits high, twenty broad from north to south, and ten from east to west. The altar was that of burnt offering in the court of the priests. Here, with their backs toward the altar, on which they had nothing to offer, and their faces directed towards the residence of the Shechinah, they were to weep, and make supplication on behalf of the people." That the Divine conduct towards us depends upon our conduct towards Heaven, is inexplicable to us although clearly taught in the Word of God. Indeed, consciousness assures us that he is to us what we are to him. It is absurd to suppose that God will alter the laws of nature because of human prayers or human conduct, says the sceptic scientist. But what laws of nature are more manifest, more universal, settled and unalterable than the tendency of human souls to personal and intercessory prayer? From every human heart the world over, there goes up to the great Spirit in some form or other a prayer, either for self or others. Every aspiration is a prayer—"God help me!" "God help thee!" "God help him!" "God help them!" Point out to me a human soul where the spirit of these is not being breathed out every day. Scripture abounds with examples too numerous here to write of God *apparently* altering his conduct on account of man's supplications.

III. THAT THE RIGHT MORAL CONDUCT OF A PEOPLE WILL ENSURE THEM DIVINE BENEDICTIONS. "Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the Lord will do great things. Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength. Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month." In these verses there is a beautiful gradation. First, the land which has been destroyed by the enemy is addressed in a *prosopopœia*; then the irrational animals which had suffered from the famine; and lastly, the inhabitants themselves. All are called upon to cast off their fears, and rejoice in the happy change which God would effect. Desolation, barrenness, and famine would disappear, and times of prosperity and happiness return. It is too clear for either argument or illustration, that if you change the moral character of any country from ignorance to intelligence, from indolence to industry, from intemperance to self-discipline, from sensuality to spirituality, from enmity to love, that the whole material region in which they live may abound with plentifulness and beauty. Such a change throughout the whole human population to-day will give to all a new heaven and new earth.—D. T.

Vers. 25—27.—*Twofold restoration.* "And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten," etc. These words refer to a twofold restoration.

I. THE RESTORATION OF LOST MATERIAL MERCIES. "I will restore you the years that the locust hath eaten," etc. That the prophet has here in view the plague of

locusts described in ch. i., cannot well be doubted. The names, though placed in a different order, are identical with those there specified. "*My great army.*" They are called God's great *army*, a name still given to them by the Arabs. Though a scourge lasted only one year, yet, as they not only destroyed the whole produce of that year, but also what was laid up in store for future years, the calamity was great. The loss of these God promises to recompense or make good by not only furnishing them with an abundance of temporal enjoyments, but affording them a delightful experience of his presence and favour as their covenant God. This promise is amplified in vers. 26, 27. Restoration in God's *peculiar* work. Who can restore the earth but him? An insect may destroy a giant; but God alone can restore the life of a dying flower. Restoration is God's *constant* work. From death he brings life to all nature. Spring is the grand annual illustration of it. God restores lost temporal blessings to his people in two ways. 1. *By giving back the same in kind*, as in the case of Job. 2. *By bestowing that which answers the same purpose.*

II. THE RESTORATION OF LOST RELIGIOUS PRIVILEGES. What are these? 1. *Worship.* "And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the Name of the Lord your God, that hath dwelt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed." True worship is one of man's greatest and most original privileges of his being. True worship is supreme love for the supremely good. The loss of this has been man's crime and ruin; the restoration of this is his salvation. When men come to praise the Lord as they ought to, they reach the heaven of their being. 2. *Communion.* "And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and none else." Loving fellowship with the infinite Father is also another privilege which we have lost. The restoration of this is the consummation of blessedness. "In thy presence is fulness of joy." This last restoration is the most urgent and the most glorious one. The restoration of lost material mercies to a man, community, or country, is a Divine work for which gratitude should be cherished and practically exemplified; but the restoration of lost religious privileges, the true worship of God and true fellowship with him, is the transcendent restoration. When this is realized, the world's redemption is completed.—D. T.

Vers. 28—32.—*The gospel age.* "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh," etc. Peter quotes this passage, but not with literal accuracy. Divine inspiration secures not uniformity of phraseology, but uniformity in facts and principles. We are authorized in regarding the passage as pointing to the gospel age; or, as Peter says, to the last days. The days of the Messiah are indeed the last days of the world. The passage teaches four things in relation to these last days: this gospel age as connected—

I. WITH AN EXTRAORDINARY EFFUSION OF THE SPIRIT. "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." Flesh here stands for humanity. Under the gospel dispensation, the influence of the Spirit would be: 1. *Universal*, not limited to sex. "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." Not limited to age. "Your young men shall see visions; your old men shall dream dreams." The redemptive influences of the gospel are like the rolling atmosphere and the shining sun—universal in their aspect. 2. *Illuminating.* It would bring the light of God's thoughts upon the soul. They "saw visions and dreamed dreams and prophesied." That is, men under its influence would receive and reflect God's eternal truths.

II. WITH PRODIGIOUS REVOLUTIONS. "I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke." These words may perhaps be properly regarded as a highly poetic representation of that revolution in governments, Churches, and all other human institutions which would inevitably follow the working out of the Divine ideas and spiritual influences of these last days (Isa. xiii. 10; xxxiv. 4). When Christianity enters with all its renovating power the individual soul, what a revolution! What wonders in heaven, what signs on earth, what blood, fire, and vapour of smoke! It is so also when it enters a community; then it shakes the heavens and the earth of social and political life.

III. WITH A TERRIBLE DAY. Peter calls it a notable day. The primary reference in all probability is to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. It was indeed a terrible day (see Josephus; see also first edition of '*Genius of the Gospel*,' p. 608). But there

is another terrible day still before us, a day of which the destruction of Jerusalem is but a faint shadow and type—the day of general judgment—the day when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise. What a day will that day be—“day of judgment, day of wonders,” etc.!

IV. WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF SALVATION TO ALL. “Whosoever shall call on the Name of the Lord shall be delivered;” or, as Peter has it, “shall be saved”—saved from the thralldom, the guilt, the damnation, of sin. “Whosoever”—thank God for this “whosoever”—D. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER III.

Vers. 1-3.—These verses describe the deliverance of God's people and the destruction of his enemies because of their injurious, insulting, and ignominious treatment of his people.

Ver. 1.—The time referred to: In those days, and in that time, is the first point to be determined. The reference is obviously to the period spoken of in the twenty-eighth verse of the second chapter, where we read, “And it shall come to pass *afterward*, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.” This seems to fix the date at least of the commencement of the events recorded in these verses. These events must have been subsequent to that Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit. But a still closer specification of the time is added by way of apposition, namely (*asher* supplemented by *bahem* or *bah*), when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem. This form of expression includes, beside the restoration of God's people from their dispersion and redemption out of captivity or distress of any kind, their elevation also to a higher position of dignity and to greater prosperity than they had ever before enjoyed. Thus of Job we read (xlii. 10), “And the Lord turned the captivity of Job . . . also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.” The *ki* which introduces the verse gives assurance that the blessing promised in the concluding verse of the preceding chapter shall be realized; while the *hinneh* directs attention to the novelty and importance of the subject introduced in the first verse of this present chapter.

Ver. 2 represents pictorially God's passing sentence on the nations that had been hostile to his people, with a general summary of the injuries inflicted on them. I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat. More than eight centuries before the Christian era King Jehoshaphat had gained a splendid victory over the allied army of the neighbouring peoples—Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites—who had united their forces against Jerusalem. The king had

been assured of this victory by the prophecy of Jahaziel. Songs of praise had preceded the battle, and songs of thanksgiving had succeeded the victory; hence the place was called the valley of Berachah, or blessing. The remembrance of such a remarkable deliverance, not more than half a century before the prophet's time, would make a vivid impression on the mind of the prophet and his people. Accordingly, this splendid piece of past history is interwoven with the prophet's prediction of the future, and forms its groundwork. It is as though he said, “On a memorable occasion and in a well-known valley God was pleased to vouchsafe to his people and prince a glorious victory over the combined forces of their enemies; so at a future period, under the reign of Prince Messiah, God will subdue and destroy the Gentile nations that had oppressed his people.” It matters little whether we understand the valley of Jehoshaphat in the literal sense, as perhaps the valley of the Kedron between Jerusalem and Olivet, or in a figurative sense; the representation is equally appropriate, and the imagery equally impressive. “This,” says Aben Ezra, “was the war in which the children of Moab and Ammon and Seir combined their force together to a very great multitude, while Jehoshaphat had out of Judah and Benjamin mighty men of valour; and the valley of Jehoshaphat is the valley of Berachah, for Jehoshaphat called its name so.” Kimchi gives the following alternative sense: “There shall be the war, and this valley belonged to King Jehoshaphat; perhaps he built there, or made there a work, and it was called after his name, and the valley was near to the city of Jerusalem; or it is called the valley of Jehoshaphat after the name of the judgment, as he said, ‘I will plead with them there.’” And will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations. God would plead, or contend, with the nations, and pass sentence upon them on account of their dispersion of his heritage—*nachalathi*, his peculiar people, and their partition of his land, *artsi*, or kingdom. This must be referred to the long subsequent time when Palestine became

a Roman province, and its capital levelled with the ground: then the great dispersion of the covenant people among the nations commenced, and continues till the present day.

Ver. 3.—**They have cast lots for my people; and have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink.** Such was the contumely with which they were treated at the time of the great catastrophe referred to. The captives were distributed by lot among the conquerors; these in turn sold them to the slave-dealers for the merest trifle—a slave-boy for the hire of a harlot, or a slave-girl for a glass or draught of wine. Such treatment had been predicted ages before, and was verified by contemporaneous history (comp. Lev. xvi. 33, *eqq.*, and Deut. xxviii. 36 for the prediction; and Josephus, 'De Bell. Jud.,' vi. 9. 2, 3, for the fulfilment). Ninety-seven thousand prisoners were disposed of as follows: those under seventeen years of age were publicly sold; some exiled to work in Egyptian mines; others reserved to fight with wild beasts in the amphitheatre. Also in the time of Hadrian four Jewish captives were sold for a measure of barley. Nay, more, the Syrian commander, Nicanor, bargained by anticipation for the sale of such Jews as should be taken captive in the Maccabean war. The prophet, moreover, looks forward in prophetic vision to the day of final judgment, when God will, in just retribution, pour out the vials of his wrath on all the oppressors of his Church and people.

Ver. 4.—8.—In these verses the prophet pauses before proceeding to describe the final judgment of the world-powers for their hostility to and oppression of his Church, and points out the bitter enmity of neighbouring nations to the covenant people in the prophet's own day, with a prediction of the righteous retribution that awaited them.

Ver. 4.—The northern sea-board of the Phœnicians, including the famous cities of Tyre and Sidon, also the southern sea-coast and plain of the Philistines, with their five principalities, are joined by *egam* with the nations notorious for injuring and oppressing the people of God. The words rendered in the Authorized Version, **What have ye to do with me?** rather mean, *What would ye with me?* or still better, *What are ye to me?* that is, how worthless and despicable in my sight! The disjunctive question which follows becomes clearer by adopting the rendering of Keil and Wünsche, **Will ye repay me a deed, or do anything against me?** that is, will ye repay me some wrong-doing which ye fancy I have inflicted on you? or will ye, without such supposed provocation, and of your own

free will, do or attempt to do anything against me? The double question with *erim* instead of *im* repeats, in other words or in a modified form, the preceding question; while the question itself, as often, implies a negative sense to the effect that they had neither right nor reason for avenging themselves on the people of God—for God here identifies himself with his people—nor for attempting wantonly and gratuitously to harm them. The consequence would only be a swift and speedy return of the mischief on their own head, so that, as is usual with the wicked, they fall themselves into the pit which they dig for others. The idea of revenge rather than of punishment gets too great prominence in the old versions and commentators. The comment of Kimchi is instructive, though more in harmony with the rendering of the Authorized Version than with that which we prefer; it is as follows: "What have I to do with you, that ye enter my land while ye are neighbours? and it behoved you to do good to my people, but ye have not done so; but when ye saw that the kings of the nations (Gentiles) came upon them, ye allied yourselves with them to plunder and spoil. . . . Why is it, then, that ye are doing evil to me, if ye think to avenge yourselves of me because I have done you evil? When did I do you evil? Or if you will say that of yourselves ye are doing evil to me now, for he that does evil to Israel from his thought of doing evil to me, they are my children . . . swiftly and suddenly will I return your doing on your own head."

Ver. 5, 6.—The prophet proceeds to enumerate the injuries sustained by his people at the hands of their enemies, and the evil attempted against himself. (1) **My silver and my gold.** The silver, gold, and precious or desirable things, whether taken immediately from the temple of God or plundered mediately from the palaces or wealthy mansions of his people, they transferred to their temples and suspended as trophies therein—a custom common among ancient nations. (2) **The children also of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold unto the Grecians.** The part which the Phœnicians had in the transaction was the purchase and sale of the Jewish captives who had fallen into the hands of the Philistine conquerors. The mention of Grecians, or *sons of Javan*, brings for the first time the Hellenic and Hebrew races into contact—a contact sad and sorrowful for the latter. **That ye might remove them far from their border.** This was at once the climax of their cruelty and the aggravation of their crime. The object which their enemies had in view in selling the Hebrew captives to the sons of Javan, or Ionian Greeks of Asia Minor, was by that remote exile to prevent the possibility of

their return to their own land. The historic reference is thought by some to be the event narrated in 2 Chron. xxi. 16, 17, where it is written, "The Lord stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines. . . . And they came up into Judah, and brake into it, and carried away [margin, 'carried captive'] all the substance that was found in the king's house, and his sons also, and his wives."

Vers. 7, 8.—In these verses we have the recompense of reward so deservedly dealt out to the enemies of Israel.

Ver. 7.—Behold, I will raise them out of the place whither ye have sold them. Instead of "raise," some prefer "waken," "rouse," or "stir up." The Judæans would be roused out of the countries into which they had been sold, and restored to their own land, and the measure which had been meted to them meted in turn to their enemies. The deliverance mentioned here may be exemplified, if not realized in part, in the time of Alexander the Great and his successors, when Jewish captives in many lands were set at liberty. Thus Demetrius, in his letter to Jonathan, writes, "I also make free all those Jews who have been made captives and slaves in my kingdom." And will return your recompense upon your own head; better rendered, *and will turn back your doing upon your head*. A righteous retaliation awaited Philistines and Phœnicians. They in turn would fall into the hands of the Judæans, and be made prisoners of war, and, as they had done, so should it be done to them.

Ver. 8.—And I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off. The Hebrew expression does not mean "to sell by the hand of," as it is erroneously rendered by some; but "to sell into the hand," that is, to deliver over into the power of the children of Judah. The Sabeans were the inhabitants of Sheba, in Arabia Felix, a people actively engaged in trade, and related to the Palestinians in the south, as the Grecians in the north. They were a people as far off (or more so) in an easterly direction as the Greeks of Ionia in a westerly; and so Kimchi, "They were far off from their land more than the Javanites." "As the Tyrians sold Jewish prisoners to the maritime people of the far West, so the Jews should sell Tyrians to traders of the far East." The LXX., mistaking שָׂבִי' for the plural of שָׂבִי, translate the clause, "They shall sell them into captivity to a far-distant nation." If we are not to understand these predictions, with Hengstenberg, as an application of the general truth that God shall gather again the dispersed of Judah and the captives of

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Israel, we may find their fulfilment in such events as the following: the defeat of the Philistines by Uzziah, "when he went forth and warred against the Philistines, and brake down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod, and built cities about Ashdod, and among the Philistines;" their defeat also by Hezekiah, when "he smote the Philistines even unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchman to the fenced city;" and the temporary subjection of portions of Palestinian and Phœnician territory to the Jews in Maccabean times, together with the siege and destruction of their cities, as narrated by the Jewish historian Josephus and in the First Book of Maccabees. We learn also from Diodorus that thirteen thousand captive Tyrians were sold into slavery after the victory of Alexander the Great.

Vers. 9—17.—After a parenthesis of five verses, viz. 4—8, detailing the injurious treatment of the Jews by some of the surrounding nations, and the righteous retribution visited on those nations, the prophet resumes the subject broached at the beginning of the chapter, especially in ver. 2, about the judgment to be visited on the nations in general. The verses now before us describe very graphically the execution of that judgment.

Ver. 9 pictures the proclamation and other preliminaries of war. Heraldry are sent out to make proclamation among the nations. Prepare (margin, *sanctify*) war. Certain formalities of a religious nature were customary among the heathen when war was proclaimed and prepared for. Thus also among the Jews supplication was made and sacrifices offered, as we read in 1 Sam. vii. 8, 9, that before the battle with the Philistines at Mizpeh, the people urged Samuel to make earnest supplication and sacrifice for them, when in compliance he "took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the Lord; and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel;" and thus a preparation for war was a consecration of war by religious rites. Wake up the mighty men; or rather, (1) according to Keil, *waken up or arouse the mighty men*. (2) A preferable rendering, according to Wünsche, is, "Wake up, ye mighty men;" while he understands the whole address as directed to the covenant people. It is observable that one manuscript has נִרְמָה, equivalent to "make strong," i.e. the heroes. In either case, the heroes may be conceived as enjoying peaceful repose when they are rudely roused by the declaration of war; and as the word "war" is indefinite through the absence of the

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article, it implies, "What a war! how great and terrible!" Let all the men of war draw near; let them come up. The terms here used are technical military terms, summoning the warriors to advance and march onward in haste to the place of conflict.

Ver. 10.—**Beat your ploughshares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears.** The weapons of war are to be provided; and the speediest way in which the manufacture of those weapons could be effected was by turning their implements of husbandry into them. The figure may, perhaps, have been suggested by the interest King Uzziah took in, and the encouragement he consequently gave to, husbandry and vine-culture, if we may presume Joel to have been in part contemporary with that king, of whom we are informed that "he had much cattle, both in the low country, and in the plains: husbandmen also, and vinedressers in the mountains, and in Carmel: for he loved husbandry." It is also a familiar fact that Isaiah and Micah reverse the expression in their description of Messianic times; while well-known parallels are quoted from the Latin classics. **Let the weak say, I am strong; or, a hero.** The approaching war was to be one in which no release, no excuse, and no exemption from any cause would be allowed, nay, the excitement of the occasion should warm the cold blood of the weakling into some degree of warlike enthusiasm. The address, it will be observed, of the previous verse is to the heroic chiefs; that of this verse, to the rank-and-file of the army.

Ver. 11.—This verse expresses the precipitancy with which the procession of the hostile nations is hurried on in order to meet their doom, as also the prophet's prayer for the descent of Jehovah's mighty ones to the slaughter. **Assemble yourselves, and come.** It is rather, *hasten, and come*; the word *וָרָץ*, only occurring here, being equivalent to *וָרָץ*, equivalent to "hasten ye." The LXX. and Chaldee, indeed, favour the sense of "assemble;" the former has *συναποστείτε*. But that idea is expressed afterwards by the verb *רָצוּ*, which is an anomalous form of the imperative Niph. for *רָצוּ*, though some take it for the perfect with *van consec.* The word *hanchath* is usually and properly taken as the imperative Hiph., from *nachath*, to come down, the *pathach* taking the place of *tzere* on account of the guttural and the *nun* retained without assimilation, as the *nun* rarely falls away in verbs that have a guttural for their second stem-letter. The meaning (1) then, is, "Assemble yourselves." The margin, (2) however, has, "The Lord shall bring down," i.e. cause to succumb, destroy, "thy mighty ones," which

must then signify "the mighty ones of the enemy." This, though supported by the Chaldee, Syriac, Vulgate, and Jerome, is less simple and obvious, necessitating also a corresponding change of the verbal form into *רָצוּ* or *רָצוּ*. The LXX. rendering is peculiar, and as follows: "Let the meek become a warrior."

Ver. 12.—This verse points out the place where the great assemblage of the heathen is to hold, and the final decision in answer to the prophet's prayer is to take place. **Let the heathen be awakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat.** All the nations that have opposed the kingdom of God, as well as those hostile nations from round about Israel and Judah, in their more immediate neighbourhood; though these, no doubt, are primarily meant. The expression, "be awakened," of this verse corresponds to "waken up" of ver. 9. The force of *coming up* is explained by some (1) as implying the ascent to Palestine in order to reach the valley of Jehoshaphat. It is rather (2) to be understood in the general sense of *advancing* or *marching on*; otherwise "to come into the presence of the Most High God" may well be called "a coming up." The decision takes the form of a judicial process conducted by Jehovah, who as Judge takes his seat on a throne of judgment.

Ver. 13.—The just decision being come to, and the righteous sentence passed, the execution follows. Jehovah's mighty ones are summoned to execute it. By the mighty ones or heroes of Jehovah are meant his heavenly hosts or angels; thus Kimchi says, "Thy mighty ones are the angels;" so also Aben Ezra. (1) The execution of Jehovah's command is represented under a double figure, that of reaping grain in harvest or treading grapes in the vintage. Similarly in Rev. xiv. 15, 18, we find the two figures—that of reaping the ripe grain, and of gathering the grapes and treading them. The ripeness of the grain and of the grapes is here, perhaps, the prominent idea. "He compares," says Kimchi, "those nations to the produce which is ripe, and its time for harvesting has approached, that man should thrust in the sickle to reap it. So with respect to these nations, their season to die by the sword in this valley has arrived." (2) Hitzig conceives that the twofold command of Jehovah is to cut off the grapes and then tread them in the wine-press. He proceeds on the wrong assumption that *qatsir*, harvest, is employed in the sense of *batsir*, vintage; that *maggal* (from *nagal*, unused to cut, pierce, wound) is for *mazmerah*, the hook of the vinedresser; while *bushal*, ripe, which he restricts to grapes, applies to grapes and corn alike. The

passage in Revelation already cited decides us in favour of (1), the judgment being represented first by the reaping of ripened grain, and then by treading grapes in the wine-press. The verb *radah*, to trample underfoot, and not from *yard*, to descend, is more poetic and emphatic than the usual *tr*; though Kimchi maintains the contrary, saying, "Descend ye into this valley, for it is as it were the press which is full of grapes, when it is fit to tread them; so ye house of Israel, tread these nations in this valley, and thrust in among them the sword." The fulness of the vats, again, represents the masses of the sinful nations ripe and ready for destruction; what the wine-press is to the grapes, the wine-press of God's wrath is to the wicked.

Ver. 14.—This and the following verses, instead of expressly narrating the execution of the Divine command, present a *picture* of it. In one part the prophet sees in vision and shows us pictorially the multitudes of the nations pouring on in one continuous stream into the fatal valley. In another compartment of the picture, Jehovah is seen in the awfulness of his majesty and in the fearfulness of his judgments on the wicked, while he is a Refuge and Strength for his people. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision. These multitudes are the tumultuous masses. *Hamon* is from the root *hmk*, to be noisy, or tumultuous. "It is identical," says Pusey, "with our 'hum;' then noise, and, among others, the hum of a multitude, then a multitude even apart from that noise. It is used of the throng of a large army." The repetition emphasizes the masses as *pits*, *pits*, equivalent to "nothing but pits;" or *ditches*, *ditches*, equivalent to "full of ditches;" or it expresses diversity, equivalent to "multitudes of the living and multitudes of the dead." *Decision* is *charuts*, cut, something decided; (1) so sharp, severe judgment, from *charats*, to cut into, sharpen, dig. (2) Others understand it in the sense of a *threshing-wain*, equivalent to *charuts morag*, a sharpened threshing-instrument. All things being now ready, the immediate proximity of the judgment is announced to be at hand.

Vers. 15—17.—These verses picture the accompaniments of the judgment, yet not the judgment itself.

Ver. 15.—The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The densely packed masses are already in the valley of decision, awaiting the judgment about to be executed upon them. But before the judgment actually bursts upon them, and in preparation for it, the sky is overcast; darkness, as a portent of the approaching storm, envelops them; the

lights of heaven are put out. The pitchy darkness of a night in which neither moon nor stars appear is sufficiently dismal and awful; still more terrible, if possible, is darkness in the daytime, when the light of the sun is turned into blackness. The first accompaniment of the storm is addressed to the eye, and consists in the extinguishing of the greater light which rules the day, and the lesser lights which rule the night. The next accompaniment of the coming tempest is addressed to the ear, and consists in the voice of the Lord rolling in terrific peals along the heavens—the voice of the Lord like the roaring of a lion ready to pounce upon its prey; the utterance of the Divine voice when the God of glory thundereth. The third accompaniment is yet more awe-inspiring, consisting in a convulsion that pervades both earth and sky; the whole frame of nature shakes; the earthquake's shock, so frightful to bird and beast and man, has a corresponding agitation in the heavens.

Ver. 16.—Out of Zion. The presence of Jehovah is the immediate occasion of these terrors; and hence his voice proceeds from Jerusalem, or more particularly from Zion, where the visible symbol of his presence long dwelt. "For there," says Kimchi, "was his dwelling in Jerusalem; and as if from thence he roared and uttered his voice against them." Thus far the prophet pictures in very vivid, indeed terribly vivid, colours the frightful scene in the valley of decision; then stops short without describing the sad catastrophe resulting from the actual execution of the judgment. This he omits, either from revulsion of feeling from such misery, or the reader is left to imagine it himself. But the Lord will be the Hope of his people, and the Strength of the children of Israel. He shrinks, as we have seen, from describing the actual execution of judgment, and, breaking off with somewhat of abruptness, exhibits the bright side of the picture. With the destruction of his foes is joined, as usual, the deliverance of his friends. To his people he stands in the double relation of a Place of refuge (*machseh*) and a Place of strength (*ma'oz*), that is, not only a place to which they may flee for safety, but a place in which, as a stronghold, they shall be kept safe.

Ver. 17.—Jerusalem will be a sanctuary, and strangers will not pass through it any more. In the beginning of this verse Jehovah promises to be the God of his people; he points to the place of his abode, and purifies Jerusalem by judgment that it will be a true holy place, untrodden by the foot of Gentile stranger or Jewish unbeliever any more. His people would recognize his presence and his power by the wonderful deliverance vouchsafed to them. "Jera-

salem," says Kimchi, "shall be a sanctuary, like the sanctuary which was forbidden to strangers; and strangers shall not pass through it any more to do injury to them as they have done up to this day. It may also be explained that strangers shall not enter into Jerusalem, for its holiness shall be great for the future. And as the temple was forbidden even for Israel to enter there, so all the city shall be a sanctuary into which strangers out of the nations of the world shall not enter."

Vers. 18—21.—These verses picture Judah and Jerusalem as scenes of most abundant blessings, while Egypt and Edom are doomed to irretrievable barrenness and desolation. But, as the language must be understood figuratively, the prosperity of the Lord's land is set in contrast with the countries of the world-powers; but the contrast includes, as we think, the allotments of eternity as well as the destinies of time.

Ver. 18.—In that day. These words express the state of things consequent on the judgment just executed. The mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow (margin, go) with waters. Thus the mountains are represented as covered over with vines of richest growth and terraced to the top; the hills as affording most luxuriant pastures and clothed with flocks; the rivers, dried up in summer and reduced to dried-up river-beds, flowing uninterruptingly and coursing along with full stream. To exuberance of wine and milk is added, what is no less valuable in a thirsty Eastern land, abundance of water. The source of this abundant supply is a fountain; the fountain-head is the house of the Lord; thence proceeds a broad deep stream, which makes its way to the Jordan valley and across the river to the dry trans-Jordanic valley of acacias, as it is added: A fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim; from which statement we must conclude the figurative signification of the whole of this and the following verses. Parallels for some of the above expressions are not far to seek. Ovid's description of the golden age, in which he speaks of rivers of milk and rivers of nectar and honey dropping from the green palm tree, is cited by Rosenmüller; while the 'Speaker's Commentary' quotes from the 'Bacchæ' of Euripides the lines about the plain flowing with milk, flowing with wine, and flowing with the nectar of the bees. Instead of the "hills flowing with milk," we should rather expect the milk to be spoken of as flowing; the hyppallage, however, as we may consider it,

makes the clause more symmetrical with those between which it stands. Thus Kimchi: "The meaning of 'They shall flow (go) with milk,' is from the abundance of the flowing and running; he applies the name of flowing (going) to the hills, even although that the milk is that which goes and flows." And in reference to the following clause he says, "He uses the name of going to the channels." That is one side of the picture. We are now invited to look on this—

Ver. 19.—Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah. The curse of barrenness and utter desolation falls on the enemies of Judah—the nearer and the more remote—because of that very enmity and the violence which was its outcome. The Edomite enemies in the south revolted from Judah in the days of Jehoram; the Edomites compassed him in, and, by thus surrounding him, placed him in extreme peril; and though it is said he smote them, yet his expedition proved unsuccessful, for it is added by the chronicler that "the Edomites revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day." The Egyptian enemies in the more distant south made a still more formidable attack on the capital city, Jerusalem, under the famous Shishak, in the fifth year of the reign of Rehoboam, plundering the palace and temple. What acts of violence were perpetrated in these or other wars unrecorded we know not. A more specific charge follows: Because they have shed innocent blood in their land. This is understood by some to refer to the blood of captive or fugitive Jews in the lands of their Edomite and Egyptian enemies. It seems preferable to understand the suffix answering to "their" of the land of Judah, on the occasion of some hostile inroad into Jewish territory.

Vers. 20, 21.—The contrast which these verses present to what precedes is very striking. While Egypt and Edom are devoted to desolation and destruction, Judah, personified, shall dwell (margin, abide), and Jerusalem, or rather, as we think, Judah shall be dwelt in, as also its capital, from generation to generation. In the concluding verse a reason is assigned. For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed. The blood shed by the Egyptians and Edomites is proved by Jehovah to be innocent blood, because he promises to avenge it in the end, though for wise and good reasons he had delayed to do so. This closing thought is well explained by Keil in the words, "The eternal desolation of the world-kingsdoms mentioned here will wipe out all the wrong which they have done to the people of God, and which has hitherto remained un-

punished." When Jehovah thus wipes out the bloodguiltiness of the enemies of Judah by punishing them with destruction for their cruelties, while he exalts gloriously, finally, and for ever his people, he proves his sovereignty over them and his dwelling-place in Zion. The Hebrew interpreters, with the exception of Abarbanel, understand this passage (1) literally; thus Kimchi: "At that time (the day of the Lord), after making an end of the nations there, great goodness shall accrue to Israel;" the same is seen in the exposition of the last verse of the chapter. Rashi says, "Even if I shall cleanse them of the remaining transgression which is in their hands, and the evil-doing which they have done to me, the blood of the children of Judah I will not cleanse from them;" also in commenting on the same, Kimchi says, "For their silver and their gold which they took I will cleanse the nations, for Israel also shall take from them in the future, and they shall become their spoil; but for their blood which they have shed I will not cleanse them, but life shall be for life—the life of those that shed it, or of their children after them;

for for all the silver and the gold that is in the world which they shall give as a ransom of their souls they shall not be cleansed of the blood which they have shed;" also, "For the ages of eternity shall his dwelling-place be in Zion, after that it shall return there in the days of the Messiah." (2) Some refer the passage to millennial times. (3) Others to the time of the consummation of all things. Thus Keil, comparing Ezek. xlvii., Zech. xiv., Rev. xxi. and xxii., says, "This passage does not teach the earthly glorification of Palestine, and desolation of Egypt and Idumæa, but that Judah and Jerusalem are types of the kingdom of God, whilst Egypt and Edom are types of the world-powers that are at enmity against God; in other words, that this description is not to be understood literally, but spiritually;" he had previously intimated that spiritual sense, "For Zion or Jerusalem is, of course, not the Jerusalem of the earthly Palestine, but the sanctified and glorified city of the living God, in which the Lord will be eternally united with his redeemed, sanctified, and glorified Church."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—8.—*Deliverance and destruction.* The causal particle, with which the first verse of this chapter commences, connects it closely with the preceding. It not only introduces a further explanation, but confirms the statements there made. The course of the predictions contained in the foregoing chapter embraced the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost; the establishment of the Christian Church; the great catastrophes and troubles that should succeed; the destruction of the holy city and the dispersion of its inhabitants, here called "the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem;" the deliverance of a remnant from those troubles—at all events, the eternal salvation of the godly who cleaved to the Lord and his service. Of the general promise, a particular instance is given in the case of the Jews. But the promise to Judah and Jerusalem is a pledge of the spiritual deliverance of his Church and people, as also of temporal deliverance when and wheresoever such may be required.

I. DELIVERANCE OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD. 1. The relation in which Israel stood to God is symbolical of the relation in which God's people stand to him still. They are *his* people; "*my* people," he is pleased to call them; "*my* heritage," he names them. They are his "peculiar treasure," and "the lot of his inheritance," as he elsewhere designates them. Their land is *his* land. We thus see how dear God's people are to him, and what a deep interest he takes in their persons and in their property—in fact, in all that concerns them. They are his for correction when that is needed; they are his for protection from their enemies; they are his to right their wrongs, and to take vengeance on their adversaries; they are his to preserve to them their possessions, and to punish all who trespass thereon, or expel them therefrom. He keeps them and all they have as in the hollow of his hand; and they are dear to him as the apple of his eye. 2. This promise comprehends in itself a series; it is, indeed, instanced in a single case, yet it is not confined to it, but multiplies itself. Just as the Israelites were delivered out of the bondage of Egypt, and Jerusalem out of the hands of Sennacherib in the reign of Hezekiah, and the Jews out of the captivity in Babylon, and other deliverances of the Jewish Church and people took place before the advent of Messiah, so has the promise repeated itself in the many deliverances of God's people since then. Especially is it exemplified in the great deliverance from sin and Satan wrought out

for us by Messiah; and shall have its complete consummation in the judgment of the great day.

II. DESTRUCTION OF THE ENEMIES OF GOD'S PEOPLE. 1. Simultaneous with the year of the redeemed shall be the year of recompense for the controversy of Zion. The salvation of God's people and the destruction of their enemies go hand in hand together. They are frequently connected in time, almost always in prediction. 2. The place as well as the time is indicated, namely, the valley where Jehoshaphat gained his notable victory, and where the allies slew one another, as if a similar fate awaited all the enemies of Israel; or the valley so called in the neighbourhood, and within view of Jerusalem, that their destruction might be within view of the very people they sought to injure; or, as the name denotes, the "valley of judgment," for whatever be the particular place intended, it will be a place of justice. 3. The destruction shall proceed according to strict justice. God will plead the cause of his people in proof that he deals judicially, not capriciously, nor causelessly, with their enemies. In this way their destruction shall be seen to be the result of a judicial process, and fully deserved. 4. There is an enumeration of the pleas advanced, and an example of the pleading adopted. (1) Among the former are the dispersion of Israel among foreign and far-off nationalities, the division of their land, the distribution of the inhabitants, the contempt poured on them, the cruelty practised upon them, and the despoiling of their treasures, secular and sacred. (2) The method of pleading is expressive of deep and deserved indignation. Identifying himself with his people, he indignantly inquires—What have ye to do with me, that is, with my people? What injury have they done you? What provocation have they given you? Or, if we adopt the alternative reading of "What are ye to me?" the gist of this indignant interrogatory is—What interest have ye in me? What claim have ye upon me? Of what value are ye to me, that I should overlook such unjust and unjustifiable conduct on your part? Further, he asks—Will ye requite some supposed injury I have done you, or some imaginary provocation I have given you? Will ye requite me by taking revenge on my people, with whom I am so closely identified? Or do you mean to wreak your gratuitous malice on my people, and, out of sheer malignity, inflict on them injuries altogether unprovoked? Have you shut your eyes on the result of such conduct, which must be a swift and sudden recompense upon your own head? (3) The common maxim of "*Ill-got, ill-gone*," is exemplified in the conduct of these enemies of God and his people. What they got by one sin, they lavished on another. The Hebrew captives, whom they had taken by violence, they kept in home servitude for domestic drudges to themselves or others, or transported to a distant and foreign land, and sold into slavery, while the proceeds of the barter in the one case, or of sale in the other, they expended on their lusts. The silver and the gold and goodly pleasant things which they plundered from the people, or temple of the Lord, they squandered upon idolatry. It was a common custom among the ancients to hang up in temples spoils taken from the enemy, and trophies of victory; thus the ark of God, when captured by the Philistines, was transferred to the temple of Dagon, the fish-god. With what a black catalogue of crimes these enemies of the people of God were chargeable! There were violence and rapine, slave-dealing, drunkenness and lust, and idolatry. (4) The law of retaliation also applies here. They had sold the children of Judah and Jerusalem to the Grecians for expatriation to lands remote, where they would have no opportunity of combining for common safety, or whence they could never have the hope of returning to their country. Now, in turn, and as a just retribution, their children would be sold to the children of Judah, and by them to the Sabeans, a people far off. Whether this was accomplished, as some suppose, in the wars of the Maccabees, and their victories over the enemies of the Jews, or not, certain it is that the principle of retribution finds here a fitting place for its operation. The justice of this principle was acknowledged by Adoni-bezek, when he said, "Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath required me." This principle is very widely prevalent in the affairs of men, not only by way of retribution, but also in the matter of recompense. The evil that men do is returned on their own head; the good likewise has its reward.

Ver. 9-14.—*Providence, preparation, and prevention.* Circumstances of great

solemnity and grandeur shall usher in the day of vengeance on the wicked sinners of every class, especially such as persecute and oppress the people of God.

I. THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD AT WORK. Men propose, God disposes; they pursue their own individual plans, and yet all the while they are only carrying out the Divine purposes. A remarkable example of the wonderful scheme of God's providence is recorded in the fourth chapter of the Acts, when earthly kings and rulers were gathered against the Lord and his Anointed. "Of a truth," it is added, "against thy holy Child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together;" but in all they planned and purposed and performed, though following their own impulses, they only did "whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." So in the case before us, the Gentiles are assembling in great force and strenuously pushing forward their hostile movements against the people of God; and yet they, without thinking it and without intending it, are accomplishing the Divine purposes against themselves. They are hastening on their own destruction, and rushing on their own ruin.

II. THE PREPARATION MADE. The preparation is heralded among the Gentiles by a formal and fearful proclamation. The warlike preparations are on the grandest scale; they mean the work of war in earnest. Not only mighty men and men of war are summoned to the strife; but, besides the men whose trade is war, husbandmen are called away from their peaceful occupations, their implements of husbandry are changed into weapons of war. Even the weak are for the time to gird themselves with strength. What is the object, one naturally asks, of all this immense assemblage, of their activity and energy and vast preparations? Every one in that huge multitude thinks his mission is to destroy the people and Church of the Most High, and imagines himself commissioned for that purpose; nor do those mighty masses dream that their own doom is sealed, and that they are convened, not for the annihilation of the people of God, but for their own. They are convoked to appear before the august tribunal of the righteous Ruler of the universe to receive their sentence—a sentence in agreement with unerring justice, and to be executed in accordance therewith. The executioners are already on the spot; they are agents appointed and armed for the express purpose. It matters not whether they are angels or men; perhaps the enemies themselves, engaging in internecine strife, as was the case with the confederates that once came to fight against Jehoshaphat, then turned their arms against each other.

III. PREVENTION OF HIS PEOPLE'S FEARS. God repeats the summons to his enemies to assemble themselves for judgment. 1. This he does to persuade his own people that their fears are groundless, and to prevent them apprehending peril from the power and preparations of their enemies. To prevent them being troubled by the might and multitude of their enemies, he repeats his challenge, if I may so term it, for them to come on, one and all, with all their powers. Thus he means to show how puny and insignificant all those enemies were in his sight, and let his people know that his hand is in the whole business, overruling all and controlling all. 2. But he makes it evident that all his proceedings are in righteousness, that justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne. He pleads before he punishes; he sifts the case judicially before he passes sentence. He *sits* to judge, taking sufficient time and pains, so that he is justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges.

IV. PERIOD OF EXECUTION. Once judgment is pronounced and sentence passed, the execution is not long delayed. The ripeness of the harvest now ready for reaping, the fulness of the presses now fit for treading, and the overflow of the vats now waiting for the foot of the trampler, are figures easily understood, and of which the corresponding fact is the greatness of the wickedness. Harvest is used in a good sense, oftener in a bad sense; while the treading of the wine-press is always expressive of Divine wrath. The ripeness of the one and the fulness of the other imply not only the height of abounding ungodliness, but that the fulness of the time for punishment has arrived, as in the case of the old world, when all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth, so that God said, "The end of all flesh is before me;" or as Sodom, when fire and brimstone were rained from heaven on its wicked inhabitants; or as when our Lord said, "Fill ye up the measure of your fathers. 'They,' says Pococke, 'were ripe in their sins, fit for a harvest, and as full of wickedness as ripe grapes, which fill and overflow the vats, through the abundance of the juice with which they swell.'"

V. PROCESSION OF THE CONDEMNED CRIMINALS TO THE PLACE OF PUNISHMENT. The prophet himself is filled with amazement at the assembling multitudes. He looks on for a time in wonder, as one mass of living beings follows in quick succession another, till at last, as if the procession would never come to an end, he is lost in wonder, and exclaims, in view of the assembling throngs and multitudes, "Whichever way he looked there were yet more of these tumultuous masses, so that there was nothing beside them. It was one living, surging, boiling sea; throngs upon throngs—mere throngs." The place of rendezvous is the valley of Jehoshaphat, or the valley of judgment, where Jehovah judgeth; but it is also the valley of decision. This is something more than mere judgment; it is the place of sharp, strict, severe judgment.

Vers. 15—17.—*That day—the fear of the wicked, the hope of the just.* These verses picture the dread accompaniments of the time and place of the destruction of the wicked. They give us a glimpse, and a most alarming one, of the final catastrophe.

I. THE DAY OF DECISION SHALL BE A DAY OF DARKNESS. Apart from the decision itself and consequent execution of Divine wrath upon the ungodly—an execution which, as if baffling the power of words to describe, is left to imagination to conceive—the attendant terrors of that day invest it with the blackness of darkness. Not only shall sun and moon withdraw their shining and undergo a total eclipse, but the stars shall frown upon them. The lights of heaven shall be darkened, or those lights shall dwindle before the unspeakable brightness of the glory in which the Judge shall appear, just as the stars pale and disappear in presence of the sun when he rises in splendour above the eastern horizon.

II. THAT DAY SHALL BE A DAY OF DREADFULNESS. Dreadful sounds as well as dreadful sights shall augment the terrors of that day. "As the failure of the light of the sun at our Lord's passion betokened the shame of nature at the great sin of man, so, at the day of judgment, it sets before us the awfulness of God's judgments, as though it dared not behold the severity of him who judgeth and returneth every man's work upon his own head;" so the voice of God, when he shall roar out of Zion, shall be a voice of terror. Even when the voice of God speaks words of warning, it is compared to the roaring of a lion, as we read, "The Lord hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" How much more when that terrible voice is no longer a voice of warning, but a voice of wrath?

III. THAT DAY SHALL BE A DAY OF DESOLATENESS. The frame of nature shall feel the shock of strong convulsions. The heavens and the earth shall shake, but this shaking is only a prelude to something still more awe-inspiring, even such convulsions as seem to betoken their dissolution. "Nor shall it be a slight shaking of the earth at his coming," says an old writer, "but such that all the dead shall be roused, as it were, from their sleep." And when the day of final decision comes, "the heavens," we are told, "shall pass away with a great voice, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." Minor judgments are premonitions of, and should be improved as, preparations for the judgment of the great day.

"The day of wrath! that dreadful day,
When heaven and earth shall pass away,
What power shall be the sinner's stay?
Whom shall he trust that dreadful day?

"When, shrivelling like a parched scroll,
The flaming heavens together roll,
And louder yet, and yet more dread,
Swells the high trump that wakes the dead;

"Oh! on that day, that wrathful day,
When man to judgment wakes from clay,
Be thou, O Christ, the sinner's stay,
Though heaven and earth shall pass away."

When God, in punishing his enemies, shakes as it were earth and heaven, causing such changes and commotions as seem to threaten a general upheaval and convulsion of the course of nature, it is not strange if the people of God should be agitated with fears and

exercised with apprehensions lest the storm should burst over them. Accordingly, he vouchsafes to them promises to secure them against such fears and fortify them for the ordeal.

I. HE IS THE HOPE OF HIS PEOPLE. He comforts his people so that the terrors of a time of great convulsions do not overwhelm them. As God is the Ground and Founder of his people's hopes, so will he be their Crown and Consummation. He is their Harbour of refuge and their Fortress of safety. Fleeing to him, they shall not only be admitted to, but preserved, in safety. He is their Refuge on earth while the storm of wrath is sweeping over the wicked; he will be their Home in heaven at last. "The saints in the great day shall arrive at the desired haven, shall put to shore after a stormy voyage; they shall go to be ever at home with God—to their Father's house, the house not made with hands."

II. HE IS THE HAPPINESS OF HIS PEOPLE. He is the Hope of his people and the Strength of the children of Israel. We are thus taught that while all are not Israel that are called Israel, so all who are really God's people are the true spiritual Israel; and that all his spiritual promises to Israel in the past apply in the present, and may be claimed by all those who are Israelites indeed. When other men's hearts fail them, God is the Strength of his people's hearts and their Portion for ever. When the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, and sinners overtaken by them, God is a present Help to his people; and in that time of terror when the vials of wrath shall be poured out upon the wicked, joy and gladness shall be reserved for the righteous, while the joy of the Lord shall be their strength. Thus, amid all the trials of this mortal life, "in all time of our tribulation; in all time of our wealth; in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment," God is the Hope and Happiness of his people, the Support and Strength of all his true Israel.

III. HE IS THE HOLINESS OF HIS PEOPLE. While God is a holy God, heaven a holy place, the angels of God holy angels, even the Church militant is holy, and the redeemed of the Lord a holy people. But in this world the Church is a mixed society; there are tares among the wheat, chaff as well as good grain. It will not always be so. In millennial times, to which the passage points, there shall be higher degrees of holiness, of purity, of prosperity, and peace, than the Church has yet attained; but in heaven alone holiness shall be perfect and happiness complete. Meantime we are encouraged by the promise that God's presence is enjoyed by his people. He himself is the Source of holiness; the Church on earth, like Zion of old, is made holy by his presence; the place of his people's habitation, like Jerusalem of old, is a holy place; his people are a holy people. Strangers may force or find an entrance to the Church militant, or earthly Jerusalem, and pollute it; but the Jerusalem that is above, that is, the Church triumphant, shall never be trodden by stranger's foot, nor entered by anything that defiles or works iniquity. None but the true citizens of Zion shall be there, and so only those that have a right to be there. Even here and now we have the happy consciousness that God, our own God—our own "as much as if possessed by none besides, filling all with gladness, yet fully possessed by each, as though there were none besides"—dwells with us, and in us, while hereafter we shall have "unvarying, blissful, hallowing presence, never withdrawn, never hidden, never shaded, but ever shining upon us."

Vers. 18—21.—*The promise of plenty.* These verses contain the concluding promises of the closing chapter of this book of Scripture.

I. THERE IS THE PROMISE OF PLENTY. Some understand the whole of this verse as referring to spiritual blessings, especially in millennial times. "But though the prophecy belongs eminently to one time, the imagery describes the fulness of spiritual blessings which God at all times diffuses in and through the Church; and these blessings, he says, shall continue on in her for ever; her enemies shall be cut off for ever." Others, understanding these blessings as promised to the Jews when restored and converted, understand the last clause of the verse as relating to spiritual, and the preceding to temporal, blessings. In either case the language is beautifully poetic, and conveys the idea of exuberant blessings. The mountains, covered with vineyards, shall yield abundance of wine, or, without human toil, shall spontaneously pour it forth; the hills shall be clothed with flocks, or, of their own accord, shall yield abundance of milk; the rivers,

even the tiny channels, never again reduced to dry river-beds, shall gush perennially, or overflow their banks. Thus there shall be abundance of wine for refreshment, of milk for nourishment, and of water for allaying thirst or fertilizing what would otherwise be a dry, parched land. The last clause can only be referred to spiritual blessings, both because of its source—the house of the Lord—and its course, extending to the valley of acacias, seven and a half miles to the east of the Dead Sea. This is the stream, “the Siloah,” whose streamlets, i.e. the artificial fertilizing divisions, which made glad the city of God, shall make the wildest, driest spots of our mortality like the garden of the Lord.

II. **THERE IS THE PROMISE OF PERPETUITY.** While the enemies of God, like Egypt, the ancient oppressor of his people, and Edom, their constant enemy, are devoted to destruction, Judah the country and Jerusalem the city—all the members of the Church of Christ shall enjoy a perpetuity of blessing in time, and an eternity of bliss when time shall be no more. “Egypt and Edom and all the enemies of God shall come to an end; but his people shall never come to an end.” The Judah that truly praise God, the Israel that without ceasing pray to God, shall outlive all the machinations of the wicked; the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church. “The enemy shall not destroy her; time shall not consume her; she shall never decay. The people of God shall abide before him and through him here, and shall dwell with him for ever.”

III. **THERE IS THE PROMISE OF PURITY.** This blessing contains the reason of all the rest. It is the cause of the plenty and perpetuity and all other privileges. If we accept the Authorized Version of the last verse, we conclude from it that all the guilt of sin, especially their bloodguiltiness, shall be purged away. The people of God, both Jew and Gentile, shall in the day of God’s gracious visitation be cleansed from sin and thoroughly washed from all iniquity; otherwise they could not be fit for full communion with God. As long as we are defiled by sin, we are odious to the holiness and obnoxious to the justice of God. It is only when washed in the opened fountain, and purified by that blood which cleanseth from all sin, that we are made meet for the holy companionship of heaven. Here in the Church below the lessons of the Divine Word; the ordinances of religion, the providences of God, sometimes pleasant, oftener painful, but above all and giving efficacy to all, the blood of atonement, purge away our sins. But whatever is amiss in the Church or the Christian on earth shall be amended, whatever is wrong shall be rectified; and the Church, as the individual soul, shall be without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 1.—*Restoration from captivity.* It is believed that Joel was the earliest of the prophets who prophesied in Judah and Jerusalem. If so, it is remarkable how boldly he led the way in the general tone of his declarations and predictions, and especially with what poetic insight, with what religious fervour, he connected political events with lessons of eternal morality. In this chapter it would perhaps be possible to find nothing but history; yet the grandeur and solemnity of the language point rather to truths of Divine import and power as the real significance of the prophecy. The very captivity here foretold has its spiritual analogy, and the restoration of Judah is a type of the ransom of mankind.

I. **THE WORST CAPTIVITY IS THAT OF HUMANITY TO SIN.** 1. This implies that sin is not the true and proper lord of our race, but that God has a claim to the loyalty and obedience of men. 2. And that sin is a tyrant, arbitrary, unjust, and basely oppressive. 3. And further, that in such bondage, no peace, no liberty, no satisfaction, are to be found.

II. **THE ONLY DELIVERER OF HUMANITY IS GOD HIMSELF.** 1. His interposition is prompted by Divine compassion. 2. And is effected by supernatural means. In rescuing Judah from the captivity in the East, Jehovah was painting, as it were, beforehand a picture of what was yet to be. In Christ God laid help upon One who was mighty; his designation is emphatically the Redeemer. 3. The interposition is completed by the restoration of the ransomed to greater happiness than by their disloyalty they forfeited and lost.

III. THE RESTORED FROM SPIRITUAL CAPTIVITY ARE SUMMONED TO OBEDIENCE AND PRAISE. 1. To obedience, because they have tasted the bitter fruits of rebellion, and have learned the lesson that true happiness lies in cheerful subjection. 2. To praise, because such mercy as they have experienced deserves grateful and unceasing acknowledgments.—T.

Vers. 2—8.—*Retribution.* Joel's prophetic foresight beholds the calamities that are to come upon the Jews, his countrymen. Looking back upon the past, we are able by the records of history to verify the justice of these predictions. The transportations into the East, the oppression under Antiochus, the dispersion by the Romans,—these awful events in Hebrew history rise before our view. But where shall we look for a fulfilment of the predictions of vengeance and of retribution? Surely God in his providence has spoiled the spoilers, and led captivity captive! There is but a name and a memory left of the proud conquerors and the mighty nations that oppressed and scattered Israel. An omen this of final judgment—a picture of the purposes of the Eternal. The Lord reigneth, and none can stay his hand.

I. THE OPPRESSION OF GOD'S PEOPLE BY THEIR FOES. 1. The land is parted. The sacred soil is divided among strangers, for the tribes to whom it was allotted are dispossessed. The heirs become slaves, and toil upon their own inheritance. 2. The treasures are carried away. The silver, the gold, the pleasant things, which have been a delight to the eyes and an enrichment to the population,—these are carried off to adorn the palaces and temples of the conquerors and captors. 3. The inhabitants of the land are led into captivity, are scattered among the nations, far from the homes of their ancestors and the scenes of their childhood. 4. Nay, even worse, the children are sold as slaves, as worthless trifles, or as ministers to the luxury or the lust of heathen masters.

II. THE RESCUE OF GOD'S PEOPLE FROM THEIR FOES. 1. The enemies and oppressors shall be themselves defeated and vanquished. The valley of Jehoshaphat, or "the judgment of Jehovah," is to be the scene of a righteous retribution, in which the cause of God's people shall be maintained, and their enemies judged. 2. The people of God shall be restored to their dwelling-places, and their former happiness and privileges; the mischief shall be undone. 3. And the oppressors shall in turn endure the fate they inflicted upon the Lord's people; they who sold Israelites into captivity in the West shall themselves be deported as slaves into the East. From this prediction the great lesson may be learned that the Lord reigneth—that he suffers nothing to happen to his people that he will not overrule for their good and for his glory.—T.

Vers. 9—13.—*War and judgment.* This is truly prophetic language; for the writer is not merely relating historical facts, or foretelling future events; he is uttering great moral and religious principles. The form these utterances assume is determined by the circumstances of Judah in the time of the prophet; but the truth enunciated is one which is universal and all-important.

I. A PICTURE OF WAR. 1. The vastness of the scale upon which it is conducted appears from the language employed to designate those who take part in it. They are "the Gentiles;" "all the nations." 2. The valour and renown of the combatants are set forth in the expressions, "the mighty men," "the men of war," etc. 3. The military preparation and warlike accoutrements are brought before us very vividly and picturesquely in the representation of ploughshares fashioned into swords, and pruning-hooks into spears. 4. The warlike array is denoted by the directions to "assemble," to "come up," etc.

II. A PICTURE OF JUDGMENT AND RETRIBUTION. 1. The vast multitudes who intend to gather for battle prove in reality to have gathered for judgment. They came in battle array to contend with the Lord of hosts; and lo! they find themselves standing at the bar of the great Judge of all. 2. The Lord sits upon his judgment-seat, his throne, whilst before him are gathered all nations. 3. Under two striking figures is set forth the judicial process and the punitive consequences which ensue. The harvest is reaped, the wine-press is trodden. The enemies of the Lord and of his people are, as it were, mown down by the hand of the reaper; their blood flows from the wine-press of the wrath of God.

APPLICATION. The passage shows us the omniscient regard of God surveying all the sons of men, and the power of God defeating the counsels of rebels and foes, delivering the righteous from oppression, vindicating the cause of truth and obedience. The sway of the Supreme extends throughout the universe; and however we may be perplexed and baffled by seeming disorder, we may be assured that the sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of God's kingdom, and that every enemy shall be put beneath his feet.—T.

Ver. 14.—*"The valley of decision."* A learned and interesting book has been written upon 'The Decisive Battles of the World.' Often in the long history of mankind, the fate of races, of empires, as well as that of kings and heroes, has been settled upon the battle-field. Decisive conflicts often occur in the region of thought and belief, in the region of personal influence, where there is nothing to attract general attention. But even more overlooked and unnoticed is the perpetual Divine judgment which takes place in human life and human society; and even more forgotten is the day of judgment, which revelation assures us shall surely come. Not denying that there may be in this verse a reference to some special historical incident, we may yet take it as conveying a great and solemn truth applicable to the moral life of humanity.

I. LAW AND RETRIBUTION ARE PRESENT AS PERPETUAL FACTORS IN HUMAN HISTORY. 1. Nations are judged by their works. What is stated in this chapter regarding Judah, Tyre, Sidon, and the Gentile nations that surrounded Palestine, is not true of them alone. God is the Ruler of the nations. National error and crime are visited by Divine penalties, and the nations that endure probation are exalted to honour and to sway. History is now better understood than formerly, and it has become growingly evident that deep-seated moral causes underlie and explain the changes, the rise, the decline, the fall, of peoples. 2. Individual life is equally the province of God's retributive government. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap;" "The wicked shall not go unpunished." His prosperity shall not last for ever; it shall be seen that there is a Judge in the earth. We, indeed, have no right to set ourselves up as infallible interpreters of the ways of God; we have no right to infer from particular sufferings particular sins; but the fact of God's moral rule we cannot question, and we should never for a moment forget.

II. THOUGH RETRIBUTION BE DEFERRED, ITS ACTION WILL NOT BE EVADED; FOR THE DAY OF THE LORD IS NEAR. 1. Men's conscience assures them that, although for a season they may escape the deserved penalties due to their misdeeds, a time of reckoning shall come, and that soon. 2. The reflections to which events constrain us, and which lead us to consider the course and order of Divine Providence, cannot but induce a belief that the inequalities of this world will be redressed hereafter; that although vice and virtue may not here meet with their recompense, that recompense will be accorded hereafter. 3. Revelation comes in to make the probability a certainty. The Hebrew prophets seem to point on to a day of the Lord, in which the inequalities of this life shall be corrected, in which the truth shall be made manifest, in which every man shall receive according to his works. Indeed, the future judgment occupied a more prominent position in the preaching and teaching of the apostles than it usually holds in Christian teaching at the present time. In that day, for which all days were made, multitudes shall be gathered in the valley of decision; the righteous Judge shall administer his awful functions in the sublimest publicity, and upon principles of unquestionable rectitude. Happy is the Christian who can look forward with equanimity and hope to the day when "every man shall receive his praise from God."—T.

Ver. 16.—*The Lord his people's Hope and Strength.* The prospect of the day of the Lord is to the sinful fraught with dread and with dismay. To them the judgment brings the delayed condemnation, and therefore the very thought of it is associated with alarm. But the language of this verse reminds us how differently the Divine appearance and interposition are regarded by the true people of God.

I. THE RIGHTEOUS LORD IS THE HARBOUR AND THE HOPE OF HIS PEOPLE. 1. They have need of a Divine and secure refuge and confidence. 2. They have received God's revelation of himself, and are accordingly able to trust and rest in him. 3. And thus the expectation which brings to others consternation, brings to them a tranquil confidence.

II. **THE RIGHTEOUS LORD IS THE STRENGTH OF HIS PEOPLE.** 1. This assurance supports them when conscious of their own feebleness. 2. And when convinced by experience of the comparative strength of their enemies. 3. To them the power of God is a welcome thought; for the irresistible might, which others fear because it ensures their defeat and destruction, will be exercised by a faithful God for the protection and preservation of all who trust in him.—T.

Ver. 17.—*The Lord's holy dwelling-place.* When Jerusalem was entered by hostile armies, it must have been to the Jews a sore amazement and trouble to behold the sanctuary of God profaned. The city was a holy city, and the temple was a holy building. National disaster involved the profanation of what was justly regarded as "holiness unto the Lord."

I. **THE TRUE JERUSALEM IS THE CONSECRATED CHURCH OF CHRIST.** In the elder dispensation certain places were holy. But the Christian religion has taught us that holiness is not local, ceremonial, or official. True holiness is of the heart. Hence the spiritual temple is that constructed of living stones. The true Jerusalem is the city composed of renewed and sanctified citizens and subjects of the new and spiritual kingdom.

II. **THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD CONSECRATES AND BLESSES ZION.** His omnipresence is not to be questioned. But the presence of his approval, his favour, his love, is peculiar to his own chosen abode. In his holy mountain, the Church of his Son, God ever dwells as in a congenial residence. His presence diffuses purity, confidence, and joy.

III. **THE INDWELLING OF THE LORD BANISHES FROM THE SPIRITUAL JERUSALEM ALL THAT COULD INJURE OR DEGRADE.** The presence of the foreigner contaminated and defiled the holy dwelling-place of the Eternal. As such invasion was loathed by patriotic and pious Jews, we can understand how welcome was the assurance that strangers should no more pass through the city. The perfection of the saved and glorified Church of God involves its freedom from all that is uncongenial and inharmonious. There shall in no wise enter into heaven "anything that defileth."—T.

Ver. 18.—*Spiritual prosperity.* The language of the prophet in this passage is obviously figurative. In poetical terms, the boldness and beauty of which are not exceeded by the graceful and imaginative writers of classical antiquity, Joel depicts the reign of peace, plenty, and prosperity. Literally these words have not been, and will not be, fulfilled. To some they speak of a restoration of Israel, yet in the future, of a period when all the delights that a nation can enjoy shall be secured in abundance to the descendants of Abraham. It seems a more sober and more profitable interpretation to read in these words a prediction of the spiritual prosperity of God's people, whether to be enjoyed upon this earth or in the new heavens and the new earth.

I. **THE MOUNTAINS DROPPING WINE SYMBOLIZE THE SPIRITUAL JOYS OF CHRIST'S CHURCH.** The Scriptures speak of wine as "making glad the heart of man." The "new wine" of the gospel is for the enjoyment of the elect. The wine of the kingdom is of celestial vintage; they who partake of it are "filled with the Spirit." The joy of the new covenant, the joy of the Lord, is the portion of the rescued, emancipated, and consecrated Israel.

II. **THE HILLS FLOWING WITH MILK SYMBOLIZE THE SPIRITUAL NUTRIMENT OF CHRIST'S CHURCH.** We are taught by the apostle to "desire the sincere milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby." Even the babes in Christ can partake of this nourishing spiritual diet; but the strong men do not disdain the food. As Canaan was "a land flowing with milk and honey," so the Church of the blessed Saviour abounds with all that can enrich and nourish and bless the people of God. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more."

III. **THE RIVERS FLOWING WITH WATERS SYMBOLIZE THE REVIVAL AND REFRESHMENT OF CHRIST'S CHURCH.** Several of the prophets, expatiating (as they loved to do) upon the glorious prospect afforded them by inspiration of the future of the Church, describe one element of that happy future by the figure of a river flowing from its source in the Lord's house at Jerusalem, and fertilizing the soil until it should enter the Dead Sea or the Mediterranean. And the Apostle John beheld the river of the water of life,

flowing out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. How exact is the correspondence between the prediction and the reality! It was in Jerusalem that Jesus was condemned, and hard by that he suffered; and his cross was the source of a river of spiritual blessing to mankind. Wherever his Spirit penetrates, there life is revived, souls are saved, society is purified, weariness is refreshed. Not earth only, but heaven, is fertilized and cheered by the water which Christ gives in a sweet, unceasing stream.—T.

Ver. 13.—*A harvest sermon.* "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe." Joel is alluding here to a coming judgment, in which the results of men's sins would appear, and each would reap as he had sown. Our Lord's parable of the tares, which points us onward to a future harvest, very fitly illustrates these words. The harvest of each year is fraught with instruction to us, reminding us as it does of the bounty which supplies our needs, the fidelity which remembers our toil, and the certainty of retribution and reward being apportioned to the careless and to the faithful. To the disciple of the Lord Jesus no phase of nature should be a blank. Each contains lessons which are as truly written with the finger of God as were the laws on tables of stone. Asking the aid of him who can lead us into all truth, let us see what truths appear in every harvest-field.

I. THE HARVEST REVEALS THE RESULTS OF MAN'S LABOUR. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." Both in kind and in quantity, every harvest is proportioned to our sowing. 1. *We see this in social life.* The nation which allows its children to grow up in hovels where decency is impossible, and under conditions in which knowledge and virtue are out of reach, will have to reap as it has sown—in jails and penitentiaries, in abject misery and festering vice. 2. *In our intellectual life,* as every man in due time discovers for himself; e.g. the indolence and the studiousness of school-days have their certain results. 3. *In the occupations we follow we sow as we reap.* Wealth or fame depends upon our choice and persistence. 4. *In the moral and religious sphere* the same law holds good, so that the worldly need not complain if they are hopeless of heaven, and the religious need not be indignant if the wealth of this world is not theirs. Yet we must remember the injunction, "Judge nothing before the time." God's Word points us on to a future in which alone we shall be able accurately to estimate the full issues of our present life. We look for a distant day when he shall say to his angels, "Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe."

II. THE HARVEST PROCLAIMS THE SUPREMACY OF DIVINE LAW. 1. *Science has demonstrated the constancy and regularity of the laws of nature.* Amongst them is this: "Seed-time and harvest . . . shall not cease." If it had not been for the fidelity of our God in fulfilling this promise, husbandry would have been discouraged, many of the race would have perished, and the world would only be peopled by a wandering race of starving fishermen and hunters. It is the stability of law which preserves humanity. If, then, we trust God in nature, ought we not to trust him in the higher sphere where he reigns as certainly? We are confident that he will be true to himself in all the physical laws he has ordained, so that we dare not trifle with them, knowing that retribution is certain. Then let us not forget his words, "He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." 2. *The thought that our God rules in every sphere should give sanctity to all our employments, and to all the relationships which they necessitate.* The Christian who does a menial service, and is treated with indifference or with unkindness, may be encouraged by the reflection that he can "therein abide with God." On the other hand, employers will feel their responsibilities, and even at the risk of their interference being resented, will give counsel and warning and encouragement (as well as wage) to the weak and unwary. 3. *Most of all, in the broad fields of Christian service, we should work as those who are under the eye of "the Lord of the harvest."* He will give us the seed of truth to sow; he will prepare the soil of human hearts; he will water what we have sown, and let it appear "first as the blade, then as the ear, and afterward as the full corn in the ear."

III. THE HARVEST WITNESSES TO THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF GOD'S PURPOSE. 1. *He has a purpose about everything, but with him there is no haste.* In proportion as we

are co-workers with him, we must experience the Divine slowness. A farmer cannot hasten his harvest, but must wait for the due season. He can do little more than watch it; for as he sleeps and rises night and day, the seed springs up, he knows not how. He must wait and trust. 2. *Let us not be discouraged about ourselves, though the new life within us does seem immature.* Let us not fear the storms of temptation, weak though we are in ourselves; for God can care for the feeble blade as well as for the mighty oak. Nor should we, in our impatience, try to force spiritual growth by unwholesome excitement. "In due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

CONCLUSION. 1. *Even in this life the law of retribution and reward makes itself felt.* The old proverb truly says, "He that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him." Haman plotted his own destruction. His vaulting ambition overleaped itself. The men of Babel meant to form a social combination which should bid defiance to God, but only brought about their scattering. The Pharisees crucified the Son of God, but they made his cross the pivot of the world's history. Our own observation and experience can give many examples of folly and sin bringing dire results even in this world. Popular proverbs embody this universal expectation: e.g. "Ashes fly in the face of him that throws them;" "Harm watch, harm catch;" "He that sows thorns, let him not walk barefoot;" "Even as I have seen, they that plough iniquity and sow wickedness reap the same." 2. *The law of retribution, of which we see glimpses here, will be revealed in the experience of all men hereafter.* On earth we see, as it were, an ear or two ripening to show what the crop will be like; but the harvest is yet to come, and none can hinder it or alter it. Let us not delay the sowing of good seed until the mandate is heard, "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe."—A. R.

Vers. 1—8.—*The persecution of good men.* "For, behold, in those days," etc. "In this chapter the prophet returns from the parenthetic view which he had exhibited of the commencement of the Christian dispensation and the overthrow of the Jewish polity, to deliver predictions respecting events that were to transpire subsequent to the Babylonish captivity, and fill up the space which should intervene between the restoration of the Jews and the first advent of Christ. He announces the judgment to be holden on their enemies after their return to Judæa" (Henderson). And in these two verses he specifies the reason why they were to be punished. Our subject is *the persecution of good men on earth.*

I. THERE HAVE EVER BEEN GOOD MEN ON EARTH. Corrupt as the world has been for sixty centuries, there have always been in every generation some men whose characters in the main have been good, and in whom the great Governor of the world has manifested a special interest. These are in the holy book called by a large variety of names. They are called here: 1. "*My people.*" They are his. (1) They have surrendered themselves to his will. All others are controlled by a variety of laws, they evermore by his will. Whatever they do, in word or deed, they are inspired by a loving loyalty to his will. They are his faithful servants, his loyal subjects, his loving children begotten again by his will. (2) He has pledged them his loving guardianship. He is their Shepherd. "He leads them by still waters." He is their Father. "As a father pitieth his children." He makes for them all necessary provision, both for this life and for the life that is to come. 2. "*My heritage.*" In Exod. xix. 5 you have these words, "Now therefore if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine." He who owns the universe, esteems holy souls as the most valuable of his possessions. The vast universe of matter is in his estimation worth nothing in comparison with one truly virtuous spirit.

II. THESE GOOD MEN ON EARTH HAVE GENERALLY BEEN SUBJECT TO PERSECUTION. "Whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land." The faithful and the true amongst the Jews had, subsequent to their restoration from Babylonish captivity, been driven by violence amongst the nations. The indignities and cruelties to which they were subject are specified in the subsequent verses. "Persecution," says an old writer, "is the reigning sin of the world." The enmity between the seed of the woman and the serpent has shown itself from the beginning. "Marvel not," said Christ, "that the world hate you." There is a persecution that, whilst it does not involve bonds, imprisonments, and physical violences, involves the malice of hell, and

inflicts grievous injury. There is social calumny, scorn, degradation, and various disabilities. The good must ever suffer in a world like this for conscience' sake.

III. THEIR PERSECUTION WILL BE AVENGED BY HEAVEN. "I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel." It is not necessary to suppose that the valley of Jehoshaphat here means the vale through which the Kedron flows, lying between the city of Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives; or the valley of blessings mentioned in 2 Chron. xx., or any other particular place. Its literal meaning is, "the valley where God judgeth." It means here the scene where God would deal out retribution upon the nations that persecuted his people. It was in the valley of Jehoshaphat that in all probability the army of Sennacherib was slain by Heaven's avenging angel. Ah! the time hastens when persecutors of all types and ages will have full retribution dealt out to them in some great valley of Jehoshaphat.—D. T.

Vers. 9—17.—*Retribution.* "Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles," etc. Here is the first startling boom of the righteous retribution. Some think the reference is to the approach of Sennacherib, or Nebuchadnezzar, or Antiochus; but the language seems strong and grand enough to represent the approach of the last day. In this retributive scene there are several things observable.

I. THE GREATEST RESISTANCE ABSOLUTELY FUTILE. "Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: beat your ploughshares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord." The idea is—Let all the enemies of God do their utmost to ward off this judgment. It means—Do your utmost, muster all your strength, "wake up the mighty men," let them turn their agricultural implements into weapons of war, swords and spears; all will be futile. Heaven bids defiance to all such opposition. "The heathen may rage, and the people imagine a vain thing; but he that sitteth in the heavens laughs them to scorn." "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." Wicked spirits will fight to the utmost, but will fail.

II. THE GREATEST MULTITUDES ASSEMBLED TOGETHER. "Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about. . . . Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision." Oh, this valley of decision, this valley of Jehoshaphat, this scene of judgment! what untold multitudes are summoned to appear therein! All the men of all generations will be there, and the Judge will appear also, and all the holy angels too, etc.

III. THE GREATEST PROPRIETY DISPLAYED IN THE WHOLE. "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great." The judgment is only the harvest; hell is only sin ripened into fruit. "In that valley those that have sowed to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; those that have sowed to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap everlasting life." No one, then, will have any just reason to complain. It is mere reaping of what they have sown; it is the mere result of their own labours.

IV. THE GREATEST AWFULNESS DISPLAYED. "The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake." He shall "roar." Now he speaks in the still small voice of mercy, then he shall roar like a lion, striking terror into all ungodly hearts. "At his voice the heavens and the earth shall shake." The idea is (1) he will appear on that day in such a way as to strike terror into the hearts of his enemies; and (2) to inspire hope in the hearts of his people. "The Lord will be the Hope of his people." Should the material universe be frightened into nothingness at his approach, even then his people will still have a strong Hope in him. "God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in time of trouble." Let us learn calmly to await the judgment.

"God's ways seem dark, but soon or late
They touch the shining hills of day;
The evil cannot brook delay,
The good can well afford to wait."

D. T.

Vers. 18—21.—*The millennium era.* “And it shall come to pass in that day,” etc. This passage begins with a splendid representation of the glorious prosperity which shall attend the people of God after the destruction of all their enemies. Whatever their application to the Jews at any period of their history, they certainly bear an application to that period foretold by prophets and sung by poets,—the millennial period. Giving it this application, observe—

I. IT WILL BE AN ERA OF PLENTIFUL PROVISION. “And it shall come to pass in that day that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim.” Fertilizing streams will irrigate the land. The vineyards on the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the well-fed cattle shall yield abundance of milk. The idea is, in that age there will be a profusion of all that is necessary to supply the needs and gratify the desires of men. The time, I verily believe, will come when pauperism will be banished from the earth, when indigence, squalor, and want will be evils existing only in the history of the past. Even now it does not require the earth to be more fruitful than it is, to yield mankind ample supplies. What is wanted is men less avaricious, indolent, extravagant, intemperate, and wasteful.

II. IT WILL BE AN ERA OF COMPLETE CONQUEST. “Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land.” Egypt and Edom, the old and inveterate enemies of the Jews, are here represented as crushed into utter desolation. Error and sin are the Egypt and Edom of the world. These will be crushed one day. The great moral Deliverer will bruise Satan under our feet, will put down all rule and authority, will make mankind more than conquerors. There is a period of moral conquest and moral kingship that will dawn upon souls before the history of the world is over.

III. IT IS AN ERA OF ABIDING PROSPERITY. “Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation.” So long as the earth endures the righteous shall continue. They will endure throughout all generations, and happiness will attend them. The kingdom of truth, purity, love, and peace, which Christ is now building up, and which one day he will make commensurate with the world, will continue from generation to generation; it will have no end.

IV. IT IS AN ERA OF MORAL PURITY. “For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed.” That is, I will radically cleanse them. Their very blood, which has been a current of moral pollution, I will make pure in every particle. I will cleanse, not merely their skin, or their external parts, but the whole current of their life.

Such is the era which the passage anyhow suggests; such is the era that awaits the earth. Would that it had dawned! Haste, ye circling seasons, and bring it on—or rather haste, ye servants of Christ, to disseminate those principles of the gospel over the earth in whose mature development consists the blessed era!

“The time shall come when every evil thing
From being and remembrance both shall die;
The world one solid temple of pure gold.”
(‘Festus.’)

D. T.

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TO

THE BOOK OF JOEL.

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