

THE
PULPIT COMMENTARY,

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THE BOOK OF OBADIAH.

INTRODUCTION.

§ I. SUBJECT OF THE BOOK.

THE Book of Obadiah is occupied with one subject—the punishment of Edom for its cruel and unbrotherly conduct towards Judah at the time of some great national calamity, merging at the end in a prophecy of the restoration of Israel. We must not suppose, however, that Obadiah intends to limit his utterances to a denunciation of the Edomites. His words are not exclusively intended for their case. While what he says concerning their destruction is to be regarded as literally true, they are also taken as the type of nations hostile to God, and their overthrow prefigures the universal judgment on Gentiles, which should usher in the establishment of the kingdom of God, the sovereignty of Jehovah over all the world. The work consists of two parts—one (vers. 1—16) telling of the destruction of Edom, and the causes thereof; the other (vers. 17—21), of the salvation and final victory of Israel. It commences with a proclamation of Jehovah to the nations to come and do battle against Edom. Relying on the impregnable nature of her seat among the rocks of Petra, she fears no foe, yet thence the Lord shall bring her down. She shall suffer no mere predatory inroad, but shall be totally stripped and plundered. The allies in whom she trusted shall prove treacherous, and laugh her credulity to scorn. The wise men for whom she was widely celebrated shall fail to save her in that day; all her valiant chiefs shall become faint-hearted, and utter desolation shall be her portion. Why is Edom thus afflicted? It is in retribution for the wrong which she did to Israel, the covenant nation, to whom she was united by closest ties of kindred. When Judah was reduced to low estate, Edom rejoiced in her sister's calamity, beheld her disaster with malicious satisfaction, and sided with her enemies in the plunder and murder of the wretched inhabitants of Jerusalem. Such conduct the Edomites will, as the prophet foresees, repeat at the first opportunity; and for this, when God visits the heathen, they shall be marked out for destruction, and shall

receive the measure which they meted to others. The last five verses comprise the second part of the prophecy. On Mount Zion there shall be those that escape, and deliverance shall be given to the house of Jacob. The Israelites shall be agents in God's hand for the accomplishment of his vengeance; they shall expel the invaders of their country, and spread abroad on every side; the dispersed among the Gentiles shall return to their fellow-countrymen; and the great consummation shall arrive when "the kingdom shall be the Lord's."

The relation of Edom to Israel had for the most part been of the most unfriendly character. Quarrels between relatives are proverbially bitter; this was the case with these two nations. The hostility showed itself in the refusal to allow Israel to pass through their land on the way to Canaan; it led to wars with Saul (1 Sam. xiv. 47) and with David, who must have had good reason for his very severe treatment of them when he put to death all the males (2 Sam. viii. 13, 14, Revised Version; 1 Kings xi. 15, etc.). Hadad, an Idumean chief, was one of Solomon's most inveterate opponents (1 Kings xi. 14—22); and though the Edomites were for many years kept under by stern measures, yet they rebelled whenever they saw a hope of success. Thus they joined with Moab and Ammon in an invasion of Judæa in the time of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. xx. 22); under Jehoram they regained their independence, massacred the Judæans who were in their borders, and, in alliance with Philistines and desert tribes, plundered the king's palace in Jerusalem and slew his sons (2 Chron. xxi. 8, 17; Joel iii. 19; Amos i. 11). Some years later, however, they were successfully attacked by Amaziah, their stronghold Sela, or Petra, was taken, and the population was put to the sword, twenty thousand being slain in battle or butchered afterwards (2 Kings xiv. 7; 2 Chron. xxv. 11, etc.). Yet they were never completely subdued; they were always on the watch to smite Judah and to carry away captives (2 Chron. xxviii. 17). When Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, they gladly joined the invaders (Ezek. xxxv.; xxxvi. 5), helped to plunder the city and to cut off stragglers who endeavoured to escape. This hostile attitude of Edom towards God's people is the ground of the judgment denounced by Obadiah.

The following eloquent passage from Dean Stanley's 'Lectures on the Jewish Church' (ii. 556) shows the attitude of Edom, and the feeling evoked by it in the breast of the Jews: "Deepest of all was the indignation roused by the sight of the nearest of kin, the race of Esau, often allied to Judah, often independent, now bound by the closest union with the power that was truly the common enemy of both. There was an intoxication of delight in the wild Edomite chiefs, as at each successive stroke against the venerable wall, they shouted, 'Down with it, down with it, even to the ground!' They stood in the passes to intercept the escape of those who would have fled down to the Jordan valley; they betrayed the fugitives; they indulged their barbarous revels on the temple hill. Long and loud has been the wail of execration which has gone up from the

Jewish nation against Edom. It is the one imprecation which breaks forth from the Lamentations of Jeremiah; it is the culmination of the fierce threats of Ezekiel; it is the sole purpose of the short, sharp cry of Obadiah, it is the bitterest drop in the sad recollections of the Israelite captives by the waters of Babylon; and the one warlike strain of the evangelical prophet is inspired by the hope that the Divine Conqueror should come knee-deep in Idumean blood."

The territory occupied by the Edomites extended from the southern end of the Dead Sea to the Elanitic Gulf, and comprised an area of about two thousand square miles. Though it was a mountainous district, and well deserved its biblical names of "the mount of Esau" and "Mount Seir," there was no want of fertile soil in its valleys and terraces. The ancient capital appears to have been Bozrab, a city that lay a few miles south of the Dead Sea. But at the time of Obadiah's prophecy this had been supplanted by the celebrated Sela, or Petra, the peculiar position of which place, with its difficult access, its rock-hewn dwellings, and natural defences, had tended to encourage in the Edomites a spirit of independence and security, which taught them to defy attack and to spurn all attempts at subjection.

There has always been great difficulty in visiting the modern representatives of the Edomites, though some few enterprising persons have penetrated their fastnesses, and given to the world the results of their investigations. A late traveller who has succeeded in inspecting Petra has described his visit in the *Century Magazine*, November, 1885, from which the following extracts are taken: "Petra is identified with the Hebrew Selah, 'a Rock,' the Amorite, Edomite, and Moabite stronghold (Judg. i. 36; 2 Kings xiv. 7; Isa. xvi. 1). Strabo (xvi. 663; v. 15, edit. Did.) tells us of Petra as a city shut in by rocks in the midst of the desert, yet supplied abundantly with water, and important as a place of transit for Oriental productions. The city lay in a narrow valley, surrounded by precipitous hills. On the eastern and western sides the cliffs rise almost perpendicularly to the height of six or seven hundred feet. On the north and south the natural barriers are less formidable, and may, in places, be passed by camels. Many recesses, or small lateral valleys, open into the main valley. The circuit of the entire depression, including these lateral valleys, is about four miles. . . . The site of Petra lies half-way between the Gulf of Akabah and the Dead Sea, about seventy miles, as the vulture flies, from each. It has been said that there is but one entrance to Petra. Yet there is a 'back door,' so to speak, through which some travellers have made their way into the city, and by means of which they have also more suddenly made their departure. The real approach is through a narrow gorge (Wady Mousa) some two miles long, of which the gateway faces the east. This is reached from Palestine by way of Moab, east of the Dead Sea, and from the south by the route I took [viz. across the Red Sea, a few miles south of Suez; down the desert to Mount Sinai; thence north and east to the head of the Gulf of Akabah]. The back door may be gained

from north or south by way of the Wady Arabah—the vast desert waste which lies between the Gulf of Akabah and the Dead Sea, into which it opens near the base of venerable Mount Hor. . . . Breaking our way through the jungle on the further side of the stream [the Sik], we found ourselves in the very heart of the necropolis of Petra. . . . It may be useful to remind the reader, before we enter Petra proper, that all its principal structures, be they tombs, palaces, or temples, are excavated from the rock, and not constructed of quarried stone. The sides of the mountains are cut to smooth perpendicular faces, which are occupied by unbroken ranges of temples and of homes for the living and the dead. The interiors behind the ornate fronts are but caves squared by the old stone-cutter, and are lighted only by their doors. Continuing our advance, we followed the stream a few rods, and descending as the pass narrowed, the entrance of the frightful chasm, seen afar off at sunrise, was reached at last. What an impregnable gateway! Spanning it is a fine buttressed arch, resting upon rock-cut foundations. Beneath this a little stream gurgles. We followed it through the only entrance—the ‘front door’ of Petra. The top of the northern wall of the defile was once inhabited. Excavations, bridges, terraced gardens, and various other evidences remain upon it of the industry and artistic taste of a wonderfully persevering people. When we had come fairly inside the gorge, we found it at times so narrow that two of us could not walk abreast. Its perpendicular sides vary in height from four hundred to seven hundred feet, and frequently, without absolutely meeting, they overhang to such a degree that the sky is shut out from the sight for a hundred yards at a stretch. On every side, more than a yard above the stream-bed, channels are cut in the rock as conduits for water, and in some places terra-cotta pipes are found cemented in these channels. Tiny niches abound also, cut in the sides of the gorge—old pagan divinities, no doubt. The growth of oleanders becomes more dense as the gorge descends. Green caper plants dangle from the crevices, and here and there a graceful tamarisk is found in the shade. The tiny brook, the Sik, follows the whole way. The quarried stone scattered along the path indicates that the floor of the fissure was once paved. At every turn we saw evidences of indefatigable effort, and of how lavishly labour was expended by the people who lived in Petra in its days of power. For nearly two miles we followed the semi-subterranean passage. The pathway now descended; the water grew deeper, the opposing thicket more impassable, the scene more grand. . . . Emerging from the gorge into an open area, we stood face to face with the strange edifice (the Khuzneh). . . . The colour is a delicate rose-pink, like that of the buildings further on in the city, almost unbroken by waves of other hue. . . . As the inner gate of the city beyond the Khuzneh was entered, to the right and left wondrous architectural fancies loomed up. On the left is a group of square-cut edifices, seeming at first like gigantic steps, but out of which varied façades appear upon a closer view. On the right is a trio of tombs and temples

hewn from the end of a range of cliffs, the last one looking like a great grim warder at the city gate. Beneath are numberless excavations, each one of which, from its appearance, might have been used first as a home for the living before being appropriated as a tomb. . . . Now emerging into the expanse of the little valley, the full glory of the Edomite capital burst upon us. Nature built these stupendous walls, and man adorned them with patient workmanship, each artist vying with his fellow in shaping these rainbow cliffs into forms of beauty."

The fulfilment of Obadiah's prophecy may be briefly summarized. It is most probable that, after the fall of Jerusalem, and notwithstanding the assistance which they gave to Nebuchadnezzar on that occasion, the Edomites were subdued by that monarch some five years later. History fails to assert this fact in unmistakable terms, but it is satisfactorily inferred from other considerations. Jeremiah prophesies (xxv. 9; xxvii. 3—6) that the Chaldeans shall attack this country as well as Egypt (xliii. 8—13), and Josephus ('Ant.,' x. 9. 7) narrates how they warred against Coele-Syria, the Ammonites, and Moabites, and then proceeded to invade Egypt. It is highly improbable that they left Petra unconquered in their rear, more especially as in all likelihood Edom joined with Ammon and Moab in resisting this aggression. Rather, the ruin mentioned by Malachi (i. 3, 4), "They shall build, but I will throw down," was then inflicted, and their "mountains were made a desolation, and their heritage given to the jackals of the wilderness." At this time the Nabathæans, an Arabian tribe, and possibly sent thither by Nebuchadnezzar, took possession of Petra; and thus, according to Obadiah's word, the heathen rose up against her in battle, seized her stronghold, and brought her down to the ground. Antigonus, one of the generals of Alexander the Great, conquered this people and despoiled Petra, B.C. 312. The Edomites, who had established themselves in Southern Palestine, suffered heavy defeats at the hands of Judas Maccabæus (1 Macc. v. 3, 65); John Hyrcanus compelled them to submit to the Mosaic Law (Josephus, 'Ant.,' xiii. 9. 1); Alexander Jannæus completed their ruin (ibid., 15. 4). The scanty remains of the people which existed at the siege of Jerusalem were almost entirely put to the sword ('Bell. Jud.,' iv. 5, etc.; v. 6. 1); the few survivors of the massacre took refuge among the tribes of the desert, and were absorbed in their community, so that Origen could say that in his time their name and language had wholly perished ('In Job.').

§ II. AUTHOR.

Of Obadiah, the author of this prophecy, nothing whatever is known. Not even his father's name is given in the title of the book, which is simply, "the vision of Obadiah." The name itself (in Greek, Ἀβδίου or Ὀβδίου, *sc.* Ὁπαῖς; in Latin, *Abdias*) signifies "Servant" or "Worshipper of Jehovah," and was common among the Hebrews; but the attempt to

identify the prophet with any of the persons so called in Holy Writ is entirely unsuccessful, and has arisen rather from the natural desire to know more concerning this holy man than from any special evidence or probability. Persons of the same name (though sometimes in different form) are found in 1 Kings xviii. 3; 1 Chron. iii. 21; vii. 3; viii. 38; ix. 16, 44; xii. 9; xxvii. 19; xxxiv. 12; Ezra viii. 9; Neh. x. 5; 2 Chron. xvii. 7; xxxiv. 12; but none of these has any pretension to be considered our prophet. The contents of his prophecy prove that he belonged to the kingdom of Judah, and St. Ephrem asserts that he came from Siohem. His tomb was shown at Samaria in St. Jerome's time.

§ III. DATE.

The age in which Obadiah lived and prophesied is a matter of great dispute, and, after all that can be said, must be considered as only probably ascertained. The most varying opinions have been held. While some regard him as the earliest, or among the earliest, of the minor prophets, others place him after the destruction of Jerusalem in the time of Captivity; and Hitzig sets his date as late as B.C. 312. The interval between the various dates amounts to six hundred years. "That is," says Dr. Pusey ('Minor Prophets,' p. 227), "just as if men doubted, *from internal evidence*, whether a work were written in the time of William the Conqueror or in that of Cromwell; of St. Louis or Louis XVIII.; or whether Hesiod was a contemporary of Callimachus, and Ennius of Claudian; or the author of the 'Nibelungen Lied' lived with Schiller." The elements for determining this controversy are not very satisfactory. First, there is the position of the book in the Hebrew Bible. If this were proved to be strictly chronological, the question might be thus decided, and Obadiah might be regarded as prophesying about the age of Amos, next to whom he is arranged. The Septuagint places his book between Joel and Jonah, setting Micah before the former; and this order would give an approximately similar date. In the Hebrew arrangement the exilian or post-exilian prophets certainly occupy the last place; and Obadiah, occurring among the older seers, between Amos and Jonah, would appear to belong to an earlier age. But it is objected that this position is due to his prophecy being an expansion of the prediction about Edom in the concluding words of Amos (ix. 12), and has no bearing whatever upon his date. Though we can by no means concede this, and are disposed to lay great weight on the arrangement of the Hebrew canon, we must be guided by other considerations in determining the question. The contents of the book supply two further aids. In ver. 11 Obadiah alludes to the capture of Jerusalem; and if we knew for certain to what event he refers, we should at once be in a position to settle the difficulty. We gather from his language that Jerusalem was taken and plundered; that her soldiers were sent into captivity; that her citizens were sold as slaves; and that Edom joined with the invaders, cut

off stragglers, and rejoiced in the calamity of Judah. Nothing is said of the total destruction of the city and the temple, nothing of the people recovering their lost home; they are supposed to be still occupying their own country (vers. 17—19), and thence extending their kingdom. Now, we read in the Old Testament of three, or perhaps four, occasions on which Jerusalem was taken. The first capture by Shishak, in the reign of Rehoboam (1 Kings xiv. 25; 2 Chron. xii. 2), was not attended with such evils as are noted in our prophecy, and took place at a time when the Edomites, being subject to Judah, could not have acted in the manner specified.

The second occasion belongs to the reign of Jehoram, when the Philistines and Arabians (the latter being a loose designation of the roving tribes of the wilderness and the inhabitants of the country south of Judæa) invaded Judah, plundered much treasure from the house of the king, and carried away his wives and all his children save his youngest son, Jehoahaz (2 Chron. xxi. 16, 17; comp. 2 Kings viii. 20, etc.). The description is brief, and further details are wanting; but it can scarcely be doubted that other captives were taken besides the royal family; and that if the palace of the king was sacked, the city and its inhabitants could not have got off scatheless. Amos (i. 6, 9, 11) is probably alluding to the same event when he speaks of the injuries perpetrated by the Philistines, Phœnicians, and Edomites; and Joel (iii. 3—6), when he complains that the Phœnicians sold the Judæans into captivity to the sons of the Grecians, and (iii. 19) foretells the desolation of Egypt and Edom for their violence against the children of Judah in their (the Jews') land. It is objected that "the house of the king," in 2 Chron. xxi. 17, does not mean the royal palace, but only the camp where was the king's temporary abode, because in the following chapter we read, "The band of men that came with the Arabians to the camp had slain all the eldest" children. But this proves nothing; the sons may have been killed in the camp (though the account does not say so), and the invaders may have gone on to Jerusalem, now left unguarded, and plundered it. Nor is it likely that they would have found much substance in a temporary camp. It is true that the Edomites are not expressly named among the allied peoples who took part in this raid; but they may well be included in the vague term "Arabians;" and at any rate the latter could not have attacked Judah without their consent, which they were ready to give at this particular time, when they had just recovered their freedom from the rule of David's line, and were glad of an opportunity of vengeance. Of the animosity and active hostility of Edom a further proof is afforded by Ps. lxxxiii., composed, perhaps, in the time of Hezekiah, where among the nations confederate against Israel are mentioned "the tabernacles of Edom and the Ishmaelites."

The third occasion when Jerusalem suffered at the hands of enemies was when Joash King of Israel defeated Amaziah, and brake down the wall of the city (2 Kings xiv. 8, etc.; 2 Chron. xxv. 17, etc.). But this cannot be the catastrophe to which Obadiah refers, as he calls the invaders strangers

and foreigners, and describes the calamity as much greater than the partial disaster then incurred.

The fourth capture of Jerusalem is its final destruction by the Chaldeans. Now, the language of Obadiah does by no means adequately depict this terrible catastrophe. There is no mention of Assyrians or Babylonians. The utter destruction of the city and temple, and the dissolution of the kingdom, are nowhere stated or implied. Compare our prophet's words with those of Jeremiah and Ezekiel describing the overthrow, and how tame and insufficient they seem in the face of such utter ruin! Could any true patriot have said only thus much, and have omitted so many points which added intensity to the disaster? What are the strongest expressions used? The fatal time is called thrice, "the day of their calamity;" twice, "the day of distress;" once, "the day of their destruction" and "disaster," when "foreigners entered the gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, and carried away her substance." Pillage and rapine are intimated, but nothing more. Where is any similar reproach to that of the psalmist, "Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem, who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof!" (Ps. cxxxvii. 7)? Could Obadiah have failed to recall this cruel cry of the Edomites in detailing their offences against his people, if he were referring to their conduct at the Chaldean invasion? Then, again, there is no trace in our prophecy of any wholesale deportation of the people or of the desolation of the land. The nation is regarded as still seated in its own country, and adding to its possessions (ver. 17); not as returning from captivity. These considerations seem to point to the conclusion that Obadiah refers, not to the final destruction of Jerusalem, but to some previous calamity; and none that we are acquainted with coincides with the expressions with which he describes it, except the capture by the Philistines and Arabians in the time of Jehoram, which may possibly simplify the chronological difficulty by affording a *terminus a quo*, especially if any reason could be found for regarding this event as recent when Obadiah wrote.

But if we regard this calamity of Jerusalem as the event which the prophet has in view, we cannot, of course from this fact alone, settle the disputed question of his date. It is plain that the language employed in vers. 11 and 16 implies that the event is passed; and our Authorized Version, by a mistranslation of the intervening passage, emphasizes this inference. Thus in vers. 12, etc., we have, "Thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother; . . . neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah," etc. It is certain that this rendering is grammatically wrong, and that *al* with the future can only be prohibitive; the words, therefore, ought to be translated, "Do not look," etc. (*Mē ēndys*, Septuagint; *Non despicias*, Vulgate; "Ne intuearis," Mont.). This rendering makes the reference future; and it is said that, if Obadiah were speaking of a past event, he would not give an eightfold injunction not to do something which had

already been done. It is not God's wont to warn when it is too late to repent. In answer to this, to argue that the prophet, in poetical form, is describing the past as future, seems scarcely sufficient. Rather, the truth appears to be this: In ver. 11 he is, as we concluded before, alluding to a definite capture of Jerusalem; in the following verses he is warning the Edomites not to act in the manner specified when calamity has overtaken Judah. Judging from what they had done formerly, he surmises that they will repeat the same conduct whenever occasion shall arise. He knows well how bitter and unwearied is Edom's hostility against Judah; he has seen how she behaved in the late invasion, how she sided with the enemy and made her gain from her sister's misfortune; and he urges her to act not again in this way. His prophetic eye looks forward to the future calamity that shall befall his country; from the view of the disaster which he had witnessed under Joram, he rises to the vision of a greater and more complete ruin; one is a type and prophecy of the other; and the behaviour of Edom in the former case is a rehearsal of what she will do in the latter. If the prophet's words, though nominally addressed to the Edomites, were not intended as a warning to them, and, as is most probable, never came under their notice, we may regard them as virtually foretelling their action and consequent punishment, and hence imparting comfort to the faithful few with the hope of a glorious future. The punishment which he invokes is, doubtless, primarily the consequence of their recent conduct; but the prediction embraces other crimes of a similar nature, which will increase the penalty when the moment for its judgment shall arrive. Thus far we have seen reason to decide that Obadiah wrote, not directly after the Chaldean invasion, but after the raid of the Philistines and Arabians, while the catastrophe was still present to men's memory. Again, the enemies are an indefinite mass composed of heathen tribes, not a determinate foe such as the Chaldeans. And the captives are not taken to the far east, but to the north, to Phœnicia, and to western regions. Of fugitives to Egypt no mention is made. With the Chaldean invasion in his view, Obadiah could not have used these expressions. There is another consideration which makes for the same inference, and that is his relation to other prophets. The coincidence of thought and expression between Obadiah and Joel cannot be accidental. One must have been acquainted with the other; or both must have had recourse to a third original. Thus Joel says (ii. 32), "In Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those that escape, as the Lord hath said;" and Obadiah (ver. 17), "In Mount Zion there shall be those that escape." Joel iii. 2, 3, "Whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land; and they have cast lots upon my people;" Obad. 11, "Foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem." Joel iii. 4, 7, "I will return your recompense upon your own head;" Obad. 15, "Thy recompense shall return upon thine own head." "The day of the Lord is near" (Joel iii. 14; Obad. 18); "Jerusalem shall be holy" (Joel iii. 17); "Mount Zion shall be holy" (Obad. 17); "Edom shall be a

desolate wilderness, for the violence done to the children of Judah" (Joel iii. 19); "For the violence done to thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever" (Obad. 10). That Joel borrowed from Obadiah, Keil considers proved by the expression in Joel ii. 32 (according to the numbering of the English Version), "as the Lord hath said," where, as we have seen above, he repeats Obadiah's words, which occur nowhere else. This, however, is not conclusive, as Joel may be merely asserting his own claim of Divine authority, and may not necessarily be quoting another prophet's utterance. Many other critics incline to the opinion that Joel rests on Obadiah; if this could be demonstrated, the dispute concerning the date of the latter might be approximately settled. But this opinion is at best presumptive, and depends on such allegations as that Obadiah never imitates predecessors, except in the one case of an allusion to Balaam's prophecy (vers. 4, 18, etc.); that he is more original than Joel; and that it is not probable that in his short book he should have had recourse to others for ideas and expressions.

The relation between Obadiah and Jeremiah is capable of more satisfactory determination. There are nine verses in the former (vers. 1—9) which are found in the latter (Jer. xlix. 7—22). In the former these occur consecutively, and form one connected whole; in the latter they are dispersed over a wider space, and disunited by the insertion of other thoughts. The prophecy of Obadiah against Edom is an orderly and regular production, with a beginning, middle, and conclusion, passing on naturally to the climax; Jeremiah denounces Edom at various times and in various manners, but his prediction has no internal unity, and is not worked up into a perfect whole. Jeremiah, too, has on other occasions borrowed largely from his predecessors. It is impossible that Obadiah should have prefaced his work with the words, "The vision of Obadiah," and "we have heard tidings from the Lord," if he was taking such large extracts from previous writings. A careful inspection of the two prophets (noting especially how Jeremiah has softened the ruggedness and changed the unusual expressions in Obadiah) will lead to the conclusion that Obadiah is the original from whom Jeremiah borrowed, just as he introduces verses from Isaiah in his denunciation of Moab (comp. Jer. xlviii. 43, 44 with Isa. xxiv. 17, 18; and generally Jer. xlviii. with Isa. xv., xvi.), and a passage from Amos (i. 4) in the judgment of Damascus (Jer. xlix. 27). Thus the prophecy of Obadiah was anterior to that of Jeremiah, whose utterance against Edom belongs to the fourth year of Jehoiakim (Caspari, pp. 14, etc.). The question still remains—How long anterior? Some intimation of the truth may be gleaned from the fact that there are found in Obadiah phrases and sentences common to Amos and Joel, but nothing from writers later than these. If these prophets cited Obadiah, *cadit questio*; if he quoted them, why did he refer to no later writings? The presumption is that he lived close to their time.

From what has been said, we conclude that Obadiah is one of the earliest

of the minor prophets, that he lived about the time of Jehoram, and prophesied at latest (as Dr. Pusey thinks) during the minority of Joash.

§ IV. GENERAL CHARACTER.

There can be no doubt that the style of Obadiah is remarkably original. In his very diction he deviates from the beaten track, using many words and forms which occur nowhere else. Though his language is simple, it is very suggestive, full of thought, and pregnant with meaning. Pure and idiomatic, it breathes a high antiquity, unmixed with later forms, and distinct from that of the greater prophets. There is a vigour, and terseness, and a rapidity, which carry the reader along, and place him by the prophet's side in fullest sympathy. Obadiah delights in interrogation and apostrophe, in vivid detail, and concise statement. He is often highly poetic, never monotonous. What force and pathos are there in the sustained description of the injuries inflicted by strangers on Jerusalem, ending in the sudden address to Edom, "Thou wast as one of them" (ver. 11)! What power in the warning against malicious pleasure at a neighbour's disaster, with its oft-repeated expression, "in the day" (vers. 12—14)! What solemnity in the summing up of the prophecy, "And the kingdom shall be the Lord's"! A regular sequence of thought runs through the whole book. To find in this very uniform and consistent prophecy nothing but literary patchwork, as Graf and Ewald, for instance, have done, is a groundless neologian fancy. These critics suppose that the former part of the prophecy (vers. 1—10) was an extract from an older seer—the true Obadiah or an unknown writer; that the latter portion belongs to the time of the Captivity, and was added by the compiler. The sagacity that thus arbitrarily dissects the work is singularly at fault in this case. It requires only an unprejudiced eye (even if we exclude a belief in the predictive element) to see that our book is one whole, that its parts progress equably and uniformly, that the conclusion follows naturally on what precedes; so that if we had to find one special characteristic of the prophecy, we should say that it is distinguished by the close connection of its members without break or interruption.

§ V. LITERATURE.

Among mediæval commentators upon Obadiah we may mention Hugo à S. Victore, whose interpretation is wholly mystical. Ephraem Syrus has left a commentary on this prophet. Luther's 'Enarrationes in Abdiam' are well known. Other works are those of Bishop Pilkington, 'Exposition'; Pfeiffer, with a Latin translation of the Commentary of Arbabanel (Vittemb., 1670); Raynoldi (1613); Leusden (Utrecht, 1657); the text, Hebrew and Chaldee, with the notes of Jarchi, Aben-Ezra, and Kimchi; Crocius (Bremæ, 1673), with rabbinical interpretations; Bishop Horsley, 'Critical Notes'; Hendewerk, 'Obadiæ Proph. Oraculum' (1836); Caspari, 'Der Prophet Obadja' (Leipzig, 1863); Seydel (Leipzig, 1842); T. T. Perowne, in 'Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges.' An Armenian Version was published by A. Acoluthus, in 1680, and a Syriac by Grimm, in 1799.

§ VI. ARRANGEMENT IN SECTIONS.

The book divides into two parts.

Part I. (Vers. 1—16.) The destruction of Edom, and the cause thereof.

§ 1. (Vers. 1—9.) The heathen nations are summoned to take vengeance on Edom. In spite of her impregnable position, they shall bring her low and strip her of her wealth, being aided and encouraged by her own allies.

§ 2. (Vers. 10—14.) This punishment falls upon her as the result of the malice and unfriendliness which she has displayed towards Israel in the time of her calamity, in that she rejoiced at her sister's disaster and took part with her enemies.

§ 3. (Vers. 15, 16.) For this cause Edom shall be remembered in the day of the Lord; she shall suffer at the hands of the heathen what she inflicted on others.

Part. II. (Vers. 17—21.) The restoration of Israel.

§ 1. (Vers. 17—20.) The house of Jacob shall be delivered, and shall add to its possessions, and spread far and wide.

§ 2. (Ver. 21.) Salvation shall come to Zion, and "the kingdom shall be the Lord's."

THE BOOK OF OBADIAH.

EXPOSITION.

Vers. 1—16.—Part I. THE DESTRUCTION OF EDMO, AND THE CAUSE THEREOF.

Vers. 1—9.—§ 1. *The heathen nations are summoned to take vengeance on Edom. In spite of her impregnable position, they shall bring her low and strip her of her wealth, being aided and encouraged by her own allies.*

Ver. 1.—The vision of Obadiah. This is the title of the book, declaring from whom and through whom the revelation comes (Isa. i. 1). Under the word "vision" in prophetic language is included, not only what the seer saw, the mental picture presented to his inner senses, but also all that he is commissioned to disclose or enunciate. Thus saith the Lord God concerning Edom. The prophet declares that God speaks through him. One might have expected that the actual words of Jehovah would follow here instead of tidings heard from him. And this difficulty has led some to suppose these introductory words spurious or the insertion of a later hand, others to include them and the rest of the verse in a parenthesis, so as to begin the "vision" with God's words in ver. 2. But these suggestions are unnecessary. The prophet, as the mouthpiece of God, calls his own words the message of the Lord—signifies that what had been revealed to his mind he was bound to communicate to others as a direct warning from God. The Edomites were the descendants of Esau, and bound by ties of blood to the Israelites; but they had always been their most bitter enemies (Amos i. 11). They are regarded as a type of the powers of the world hostile to true religion, whose end is destruction. *We have heard.* "We"—I myself and other prophets; or the Judeans, the prophet identifying himself with his countrymen. Septuagint, *ἡκούσα*, "I heard;" so Jer. xlix. 14; Arabic,

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"ye have heard." A rumour; a report (Isa. liii. 1); *ἀκοήν* (Septuagint); *auditum* (Vulgate). It means here "tidings" (comp. Matt. xxiv. 6, *ἀκοαὶ πολέμων*; and Rom. x. 16, 17). An ambassador; a messenger; as though the prophet saw the minister of God's wrath going forth among the heathen to rouse them to war against Edom. Perowne thinks that there is an allusion to the composite character of Nebuchadnezzar's army with which he attacked the Edomites. The Septuagint renders, *περιοχήν*: so the Syriac, Chaldee, and Symmachus translate "message." This rendering is explained by the following clause. The heathen (*goyim*); the nations, as vers. 2, 15. Arise ye, and let us rise. This has been taken as if "arise ye" were the herald's message, and "let us rise" the response of the nations echoing his words; but it is more forcible to consider the whole clause as the message, the ambassador joining himself with the heathen as their leader and comrade in the war of vengeance. Vers. 1—9 are incorporated in Jer. xlix. 7—22.

Ver. 2.—Behold, I have made thee small. Here is the effect of the summons. So in Jer. xlix. 15, "For, lo, I will make thee small." Jehovah is the Speaker, and he regards the future as past. What he determines is as good as accomplished. At this time the Edomites were a powerful nation, and possessed an almost impregnable seat at Petra. Small; in numbers, territory, honour.

Vers. 3, 4.—Edom had prided herself in the strength of her position; but this shall not secure her from destruction when the Lord wars against her.

Ver. 3.—Hath deceived; Septuagint, *ἐπατή*, "elated;" Vulgate, *extulit*. The pointing varies. In ver. 7 Jerome translates the word by *illudere*. The clefts;

Septuagint, *ὄραις*: Vulgate, *scissuris*. The word occurs in the parallel passage, Jer. xlix. 16, and in Cant. ii. 14, where it has the meaning of "refuge." Of the rock. This may be Sela, or Petra, as 2 Kings xiv. 7. The country inhabited by the Edomites lay on the eastern side of the Arabah, and extended from the south end of the Dead Sea to the Elanitic Gulf. It was a region of mountain and valley, difficult, and in many parts inaccessible from the west. Rock-hewn dwellings are found everywhere in these hills, the Edomites, when they expelled the aboriginal Troglodytes (Deut. ii. 12, 22), having adopted their habitations and excavated new ones on the same model throughout the whole district. These were useful, not only as being secure from hostile attack, but as cool retreats in the summer of that scorching tract, and offering a warm shelter in winter when fuel was scarce. Petra, the capital, lay completely hidden at the end of a rocky defile some two miles long, and could easily be defended against an enemy by a handful of men. (For a description of this remarkable place, see the Introduction, § I.)

Ver. 4.—Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle. The Hebrew gives "nest" as the subject of both clauses, thus: "Though thou exaltest . . . and settest thy nest." Job (xxxix. 27, 28) speaks of the eagle making its nest in the highest rocks. The metaphor is found in Numb. xxiv. 21; Hab. ii. 9. Will I bring thee down (Amos ix. 3). The seizure of Petra by the Nabathæans is the judgment referred to in this part of the prophecy; the complete ruin is mentioned later (vers. 18, etc.).

Vers. 5, 6.—To prove the completeness of the destruction that shall befall Edom, the prophet supposes two cases of despoiling in which something would be left behind. It will be far worse than any mere raid of thieves; nothing will be spared.

Ver. 5.—Thieves . . . robbers. The former are ordinary thieves who pilfer secretly; the latter are robbers who act with violence, or members of a marauding expedition. How art thou cut off! An interposed ejaculation of the prophet, sympathizing with the Edomites for the utter desolation which he sees in vision. Septuagint, *Ποῦ ἐν ἀνεπρίφῃς*; "Where wouldst thou have been cast away?" taking a different reading; Vulgate, *Quomodo conticuisse?* "How wouldst thou have been silent?" i.e. for fear. Till they had enough. Would they not have taken such plunder as they wanted, and then decamped? The grape-gatherers would leave some bunches untouched, which escaped their notice. There

is no reference to the charitable law in Lev. xix. 10; Deut. xxiv. 21, which would not affect, or be known unto, these grape-plunderers.

Ver. 6.—Obadiah contemplates Edom's ruin, in retribution of her plundering Jerusalem, and speaks of it as past. How are the things of Esau searched out! literally, *how are thy things searched out, Esau!* i.e. the people and property that belong to Esau. The enemy leave no place unexamined. So in Zeph. i. 12 the Lord says, "I will search Jerusalem with candles." (For "Esau" as equivalent to "Edom," see Gen. xxv. 30.) His hidden things (*μακρόν, ἀπὰρ λεγόμενον*); hidden treasures; Septuagint, *τὰ κεκρυμμένα αὐτοῦ*. Jeremiah (xlix. 10) gives, "secret places." Keil notes that Petra was a great emporium of the trade between Arabia and Syria, and that in it great treasures were stored (Diod. Sic., xix. 95).

Ver. 7.—In this dire calamity Edom shall be deserted by her friends and allies—a punishment for her behaviour to her sister Judah. The men of thy confederacy. The LXX. and the Vulgate annex these words to the following clause. The allies intended may be Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Zidon, who joined together to resist Nebuchadnezzar, and were smitten by him (Jer. xxvii. 3); or, as Perowne thinks, the Chaldeans themselves, who, though the Edomites had aided in the attack on Jerusalem, afterwards turned against them. Have brought thee even to the border; Septuagint, *ἕως τῶν ὁρίων ἐξῆλθέσθαι σε*, "They sent thee forth unto thy borders;" Vulgate, *Usque ad terminum emiserunt te*. Keil and others explain this to mean that the Edomites send ambassadors to their allies, asking help, but these messengers are conducted back to the frontier with their request not granted, because the allies are unwilling to entangle themselves in the fate of Edom. It is easier to understand the passage in this way—Thy very allies have assisted the enemy in expelling thee from thy borders, and refusing to receive fugitives who came to them. The men that were at peace with thee. Either the same as "the men of thy confederacy," or the neighbouring Arabian tribes who resorted to Petra for commercial reasons (comp. Judg. iv. 17). The phrase here, literally, *the men of thy peace*, is found in Ps. xli. 9 and Jer. xxxviii. 22. Have deceived thee, by not bringing the expected help; and have prevailed against thee, by actual violence. They that eat thy bread. The Hebrew is simply, "thy bread," i.e. the men of thy bread. Vulgate, *qui comedunt tecum*; the LXX. omits the words. The expression (comp. Ps. xli. 9)

implies the closest friendship, especially in Eastern lands, where such a tie is of general obligation. Have laid a wound under thee; rather, *lay a snare under thee*; Septuagint, *ἐθηκεν ἐνεδρα ὑποκάτω σου*, "they set snares under thee;" Vulgate, *ponent insidias subtilis* (comp. Ps. lxxix. 22). Another interpretation is this: "As thy bread (which they as friends were bound to offer) they lay a sling under thee," i.e. prepare an ambush for thee, like Jael did for Sisera. Pusey notes the climax in this verse—not confederates only, but friends; not friends only, but familiar friends, indebted to them. Those banded with them should expel them from their country; those at peace should prevail against them in war; those who ate their bread should requite them with treachery. There is none understanding in him; i.e. in Edom. The shock of this defection of allies and the sudden destruction that has overwhelmed them have deprived the Edomites of their wonted sagacity and prudence. They know not whither to turn or what to do. The following verse expands this thought.

Vers. 8, 9.—Their vaunted wisdom and their boasted courage shall fail, for God shall take them away. "Quem Deus vult perdere, prius dementat."

Ver. 8.—In that day; when Edom is abandoned by its friends. Destroy the wise men out of Edom. God shall take their wisdom from them, so that they shall be no more able to offer prudent counsel or suggest plans of safety (Isa. xix. 11-16; xxix. 14; xlvii. 12, 13). The Edomites were celebrated for wisdom or practical philosophy (comp. 1 Kings iv. 30; Jer. xlix. 7; Baruch iii. 22, 23). Mount of Esau (vers. 9, 19, 21). Mount Seir—a designation of Edom from the nature of the country.

Ver. 9.—O Teman; Septuagint, *οἱ ἐκ Θαιμν*, "those from Thäman;" Vulgate, *a meridie*, taking the word as an appellative; so the Chaldees. The southern district of Idumæa was so called (see note on Amos i. 12). One of Job's friends, and the cleverest of them, was a Temanite (Job ii. 11). To the end that. This judicial blindness is inflicted in order that all may perish. By slaughter. Murder at the hands of the enemy. The LXX., Vulgate, and Syriac connect these words with the following verse. But the Masoretic punctuation, as in the Anglo-Saxon Version, is doubtless correct (see Keil).

Vers. 10-14.—§ 2. *The cause of Edom's destruction.* This punishment falls upon her as the result of the malice and un-friendliness which she has displayed to-

wards Israel in the time of calamity, in that she rejoiced at her sister's disaster and took part with her enemies.

Ver. 10.—For thy violence against thy brother Jacob. The special action to which Obadiah alludes, and which he particularizes in the following verses, occurred at the time of the invasion of Judæa by Philistines and Arabians during the reign of Jehoram, when the Edomites sided with the enemy, and acted as the prophet intimates (2 Chron. xxi. 16, etc.; see Introduction, § III.). The iniquity of such conduct is aggravated by the fact that the victim was the "brother Jacob," who was commanded not to hate the Edomites (Deut. xxiii. 7). This enjoined friendship was not reciprocated by the descendants of Esau. Whether from envy at the superior privileges of Israel, or from other causes, the Edomites, from the time of Moses, had always been actively hostile to the Israelites. They had been subdued by David, but had lately rebelled and secured their independence, and were always looking for an opportunity of revenging themselves on their conquerors (comp. Amos i. 11; Ezek. xxv. 12; xxxv. 5). Shame shall cover thee. Shame for the destruction that hath overtaken thee (Micah vii. 10). Thou shalt be cut off for ever (comp. Mal. i. 4; see Introduction, § I.). Terrible retribution fell on Idumæa in the time of the Maccabees (see 1 Macc. v. 3; 2 Macc. x. 15, etc.; Josephus, 'Ant.,' xii. 8. 1). Before that time they had been dispossessed of Petra by the Nabathæans.

Ver. 11.—The injuries complained of were committed lately, and the prophet could speak of them as well known (see note on ver. 10). In the day that thou stoodest; literally, *in the day of thy standing*, without note of time, but implying a past event here. On the other side. The words may denote either malicious unconcern, as Ps. xxxviii. 11 (12), or hostile opposition, as 2 Sam. xviii. 13. Besides the direct application to recent events, the clause intimates the usual attitude of the Edomites toward Israel. In the day that the strangers—Philistines and Arabians (2 Chron. xxi. 16)—carried away captive his forces; rather, *carried away his substance*, as ver. 13; Gen. xxxiv. 29; Deut. viii. 17; Isa. viii. 4. Foreigners. The same as "strangers." Both words are usually applied to heathen enemies. Cast lots upon Jerusalem. Divided the captives and spoil of Jerusalem by lot (2 Chron. xxi. 17; comp. Joel iii. 3; Nah. iii. 10). Nothing is said of the total destruction of Jerusalem or the wholesale deportation of the inhabitants to Babylon, so that Obadiah cannot be referring to the

Chaldean conquest. Thou wast as one of them; literally, *thou, too, as one of them*. In this expression the past is set before the mind as present.

Ver. 12.—The prophet complains of the malignant neutrality of the Edomites. Thou shouldst not have looked. In this and the two following verses, *al* with the future is wrongly translated. It should be rendered throughout, “do not look,” “do not rejoice,” etc. Obadiab, in view of the past behaviour of Edom, and looking forward to another and more fatal conquest of Jerusalem, warns the Edomites against repeating this malicious conduct. Septuagint, *μὴ ἐπίδῃς*. Gaze not with pleasure, feast not thine eyes (Micah vii. 10). The day of thy brother; *i.e.* when some great event befell him—explained further in the next clause. Compare “the day of Jerusalem” (Ps. cxxxvii. 7). In the day that he became a stranger; Septuagint, *ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἀλλοτρίῳ*, “in the day of strangers;” Vulgate, *in die peregrinationis ejus*. The Anglican and Vulgate Versions signify, “in the day that he was carried captive into strange lands;” but most probably the expression should be rendered, “in the day of his calamity.” Rejoiced over (comp. Job xxxi. 29; Prov. xvii. 5; Micah vii. 8). Spoken proudly; literally, *make thy mouth great*; Septuagint, *μὴ μεγαλοῤῥημονῇ*, “do not boast;” Vulgate, *non magnificabis os tuum*. Utter a flood of mocking words, probably accompanied with derisive grimaces. There is a climax in this verse—first the complacent look, then the malicious pleasure, then words of insult and derision.

Ver. 13.—In this verse it is the making common cause with the enemy in the plundering of Jerusalem that is complained of. Thou shouldst not have entered. *Do not enter*; so below, “do not look,” “lay not hands” (see note on ver. 12). The gate of my people; *i.e.* Jerusalem, the capital, as Micah i. 9. In the day of their calamity, repeated thrice with sorrowful emphasis, as making the Edomites’ conduct more reproachful. *Yes, thou shouldst not have looked*. Hebrew, “look not thou also”—thou, as well as the alien enemies. What is natural in them is a crime in thee (comp. Ps. xxii. 17). Their affliction; Septuagint, *τὴν συναγωγὴν αὐτῶν*, “their gathering”—a different reading from the Masoretic. Substance, as in ver. 11. This was a further aggravation; they helped to plunder Jerusalem. Septuagint, *Μὴ συνεπιθῇ ἐπὶ τὴν δύναμιν αὐτῶν*, “Do not set upon their host;” Vulgate, *Et non emitteris adversus exercitum ejus*. This implies a warning against being instigated by the enemy to attack the Jewish forces. But the rendering in the text is doubtless correct.

Ver. 14.—The climax of injury is the cutting off of fugitives, and delivering them into captivity. Neither shouldst thou have stood in the crossway; and stand not thou in the crossway. The Edomites, as neighbours, would know all the passes into the wilderness by which the Jews would seek to escape. Neither shouldst thou have delivered up; and deliver not up; Septuagint, *μὴδὲ συγκλείῃς*, “shut not up;” Vulgate, *et non concludēs*. So Pusey, “shut not up;” *i.e.* with the enemy, driving them back upon their pursuers (comp. Ps. xxxi. 8). The Hebrew word implies both meanings—“to deliver over to confinement;” and the meaning here is—do not seize on the people to give them over into captivity (comp. Amos i. 6, 9). Those of his that did remain. Those whom the invaders had spared.

Vers. 15, 16.—§ 3. The warning given in the first section (vers. 1—9) is supplemented by the announcement that *in the day of the Lord, Edom and all the enemies of Israel shall be remembered, and shall suffer just retribution, meeting with the fate which they had inflicted on others*.

Ver. 15.—The day of the Lord. This is not primarily the final day of judgment, but the time when “Jehovah reveals his majesty and omnipotence in a glorious manner, to overthrow all ungodly powers, and to complete his kingdom” (Keil). It is announced by Joel i. 15; ii. 1, 31; Zeph. i. 14; but the notion of a judgment to fall on Gentile nations, and to issue in the establishment of the kingdom of God, was familiar long before. Balaam had seen it in dim vision (Numb. xxiv. 17—24); Hannah had anticipated the destruction that would accompany it (1 Sam. ii. 9, 10); so had David (2 Sam. xxiii. 5—7) in his last words; it is clearly predicted in the Psalms (see Ps. ii. and cx.) (Knabenbauer). Is near. Because every such judgment upon individual nations is typical of the great day and preparative of it. *As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee* (comp. Judg. i. 7; Ps. cxxxvii. 8; Jer. l. 15). This law of retribution was the ideal of heathen justice, according to the Rhadamanthian rule, “If a man should suffer what he hath done, then there would be strict justice” (Aristotle, ‘Eth. Nic.’ v. 5.3). *Thy reward* (Joel iii. 7 [iv. 7, Hebrew]); better, *that which thou hast performed*—thy work or dealing. *Upon thine own head*. Like a stone cast towards heaven (comp. Ps. vii. 16; Eccl. ix. 25).

Ver. 16.—*As ye have drunk*. There are two interpretations of this passage. By the first, the people addressed are considered to be the Jews, and the word “drunk” is

taken metaphorically in both clauses (see note on Nah. iii. 11). The meaning is then this—As ye Jews, who are upon my holy mountain, the people of election, have not escaped from suffering the wrath of God, so all the nations shall feel the same, and that to a much more terrible extent. Confirmatory of this explanation is the language of Jeremiab, who (xxv. 15—29) bids all the nations to drink the cup of God's wrath, beginning at Jerusalem and passing on to Edom, and then says, in answer to any who refuse the offered draught, "Lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished?" The same notion is found also in Jer. xlix. 12 and Lam. iv. 21, etc. But there are objections to this view of the passage. The previous verse enunciated the doctrine of retribution; this verse confirms the former with the words, "for as ye," etc. It would be no proof of the *lex talionis* on the Edomites to cite what had happened to the Jews. What is wanted is an assertion that what they had done should be repaid to them in like coin. Besides, the prophecy is nominally addressed to the Edomites, not to the Jews, and it would be most harsh to change the subject suddenly here. "Upon my mountain" cannot be equivalent to "ye who are upon my mountain;" nor is such an expression ever used to signify "Judeans." It is best, therefore, to take the clause as referring to the Edomites and their comrades, who, after their victory, indulged in unseemly revelry, and profaned the mountain hallowed by God's presence in the temple with their idolatrous festival. The "drinking" in this first clause is literal; in the following clause it is figurative. Septuagint, *ἐπινες*, "thou didst drink," which makes the connection of the subject here with that in ver. 15 more evident, and it has probably been altered by the translators for that purpose. So shall all the heathen drink continually. The prophet plays on the word "drink." The nations shall drink, not wine, but the wrath of God (Ps. lxxv. 8; Jer. xxv. 15). The nations are spoken of here because Edom is taken as a type of all nations hostile to God, and the retribution that falls on him is extended to all who assume his attitude towards God's people (Keil). *Continually*; Vulgate, *jugiter*, perpetually, in uninterrupted succession. The LXX. has *ὀλνν*, by a mistaken reading. They shall swallow down; drink a full draught; Septuagint, *καταβήσονται*, "they shall go down." They shall be as though they had not been. They shall drain the wrath of God till they utterly perish, till, as nations, they exist no more (comp. Ezek. xxvi. 21; xxvii. 36). Septuagint, *καθὼς οὐκ ὄντες*, "as if not being" (comp. Eccles.

xxxviii. 11; xlv. 9). (For the accomplishment of this prophecy against Edom, see Introduction, § I.)

VERS. 17—21.—PART II. THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL.

Vers. 17—20.—§ 1. *While judgment falls upon heathen nations, the house of Jacob shall be delivered, shall add to its possessions, and spread far and wide.*

Ver. 17.—Upon Mount Zion. Once desecrated by the idolatrous revelry of the Edomites and the other nations, now the seat of Jehovah (Joel iii. 17) and his kingdom. Deliverance (*peletah*); Septuagint, *σωτηρία*. Abstract for concrete, and to be rendered, "those that escape," or "those that are saved;" i.e. a remnant that shall escape destruction (comp. Joel ii. 32; Amos ix. 8). There shall be holiness; rather, *it* (Mount Zion) shall be holy; so Septuagint, *καὶ ἕσται ἁγία*; Hebrew, *kodesh*, "a sanctuary," where the heathen shall not come (Isa. lii. 1; comp. Joel iii. 17 [iv. 17, Hebrew]; Rev. xxi. 27). The house of Jacob. Judah and Benjamin, the holy seed, in whom the kingdom of the Lord should be established (comp. ver. 18). The northern kingdom is not mentioned. Shall possess their possessions; Septuagint, *κατακληρονομήσουσιν ὁ οἶκος Ἰακώβ τοὺς κατακληρονομήσαντας αὐτοὺς*, "The house of Jacob shall take for an inheritance those who took them for an inheritance;" Vulgate, *Possidebit domus Jacob eos qui se possederant*. These versions must have used a different punctuation from that of the Masoretic text—*morishehem for morashehem* (comp. Numb. xxiv. 18, 19). The Hebrew pronoun is ambiguous, and "their possessions" may mean either those that the Jews themselves had lost, or those of the Edomites. But nothing is said of Israel being carried away captive and losing its country; and, though the prophet may have looked forward to such a catastrophe and to a future restoration, this is not the subject here. The possessions referred to are those of the enemy represented by the Edomites, and those which the Jews had lost since the days of David and Solomon; and "the house of Jacob" signifies, not merely the earthly kingdom of Judah, but "the people of God, who are eventually to obtain the dominion of the world" (Keil); Mark xvi. 15.

Ver. 18.—The last clause of the preceding verse is here expanded and more fully explained. The house of Jacob . . . the house of Joseph. The kingdoms of Judah and Israel, the two and the ten tribes united once more. In Ps. lxxvii. 15 the whole people are called "the sons of Jacob and Joseph." So elsewhere. The reunion of the tribes is men-

tioned in Hos. i. 11; Ezek. xxxvii. 19; Zech. x. 6. The future salvation is to be for all. For stubble, which the Israelites used rather than wood for lighting fires and heating ovens (Matt. vi. 30). (For the image of fire consuming the ungodly as stubble, see Exod. xv. 7; Isa. v. 24; Nah. i. 10.) They shall kindle in them. This may mean, the Israelites "shall burn among" the Edomites; but more probably is merely a repetition of what has gone before: the Jews shall consume the Edomites. There shall not be any remaining. This refers to the total annihilation of the Edomites under John Hyrcanus (Josephus, 'Ant.' xii. 8. 6; xiii. 9. 1), and is a punishment quite distinct from their defeat at the hands of the Nabathæans predicted in vers. 1—9 (see Introduction, § 1.). The LXX. gives, οὐκ ἔσται πυρρόφορος (πυρρόφορος, Alex.); St. Jerome reads, *pyrρόφορος*, which he translated *frumentarius*. Many of the Fathers read, *πυρρόφορος*: thus, too, the Arabic and Coptic Versions. Schleusner, *sub voce*, thinks that the LXX. had in view the Greek proverb, οὐδὲ πυρρόφορος, which is used to express the idea that not even a single survivor remains (see Herod., viii. 6). For the Lord hath spoken it (Joel iii. 8).

Ver. 19.—Judah and Benjamin between them shall possess the whole territory that once belonged to the children of Israel. In Josh. xv. 21, 33, 48, the inheritance of Judah is distributed into three portions—the south, the plain, and the mountains; the same divisions are noticeable here (see note on Zech. vii. 7). They of the south. The inhabitants of the *Negeb*, "the dry country"—the southern part of Judah, shall take possession of Idumea (Amos ix. 12). They of the plain. Of the *Shephelah*, or "low land"—the maritime plain and the country held by the Philistines (2 Chron. xxviii. 18; Zeph. ii. 7). And they shall possess. The Judæans not already mentioned, i.e. those of the mountains, shall take the territory of the ten tribes. The fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria. The country and the capital. Septuagint, τὸ ὄρος Ἐφραϊμ καὶ τὸ πῆδιον Σαμαρείας, "the Mount of Ephraim and the Plain of Samaria." Others translate, "Ephraim shall possess the field of Samaria," considering that otherwise Ephraim would be excluded from the restored kingdom, and Judah would inherit the territory of Ephraim, in violation of the covenant (Briggs, 'Messianic Prophecy,' p. 317). But the Israelites proper were merged in the Judæans at the return; and if Benjamin possesses Gilead, it is not unnatural that Judah should extend northward to Samaria. And Benjamin shall possess Gilead. Benjamin, the other portion of the house of Jacob, whose territory originally

reached to the river, shall possess all the territory on the other side of Jordan. Thus the restored people shall, in accordance with the promise in Gen. xxviii. 14, "spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south" (comp. Isa. liv. 1—3). Obadiah sees the twelve tribes, once more united, extending their territory on every side; and, to make this evident, he gives certain examples, using Judah and Benjamin as equivalent to "the people of God," and their enlargement as denoting the majestic progress of the kingdom of God.

Ver. 20.—And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath; Septuagint, Καὶ τῆς μετοικεσίας ἡ ἀρχὴ αὐτῇ τοῖς νίοις Ἰσραὴλ, γῇ τῶν Χαναανῶν ἕως Σαρεπτῶν, "And this shall be the beginning of the captivity of the children of Israel, the land of the Canaanites as far as Sarepta." This would imply that the Ephraimites should be the first to go into exile, and on their return should occupy the territory of the Canaanites on the north. But ἀρχὴ may mean "domain." Vulgate, *Et transmigrationis exercitus hujus filiorum Israel, omnia loca Chanaanorum usque ad Sareptam*. The general meaning is that Jewish captives, who have been taken to other lands, shall return and possess the cities of the south. The sentence in the Hebrew is incomplete. Our translators supply, "shall possess." Pusey (in agreement with the Chaldee, and virtually with the Septuagint) renders, "which are among the Canaanites;" and this seems to be correct, making "shall possess the cities of the south" the predicate of both clauses. So the first portion of the verse means, as Henderson says, the number of Israelitish captives which were found in Phœnicia, into which they had been sold at different times as slaves (comp. vers. 11, 14; Joel iii. 6, 7). *This host*. Not a general deportation, but only the portion of the people referred to. From this expression some have inferred that Obadiah himself was one of this body. This is possible, but not necessary. The captives who are among the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath; as far as Zarephath, were probably placed there for safe keeping before being sold into Greece and other countries. Zarephath ("Melting-house"), the Sarepta of St. Luke (iv. 26), now *Sarafend* or *Sarafendâ*, and celebrated in the history of Elijah (1 Kings xvii. 9, etc.), lay between Tyre and Sidon, a little inland, and was a town of some importance, as its ruins prove. The captivity of Jerusalem. The captives from Jerusalem. Which is in Sepharad; Septuagint, ἕως Ἐφραθῆ, "as far as Ephrathah;"

Vulgate, *quæ in Bosphoro est*. The name occurs nowhere else in the Bible, and its identification cannot be established. Jerome suggests, in his commentary, that it is the Assyrian for "boundary," and not a proper name at all. The Peshito and the rabbins and modern Jews interpret it as "Spain." Keil supposes it to be "Sparta;" Pusey, "Sardia." For this last explanation some ground has been found in an inscription of Nakshi-Rustam, where a place called *Oparda* occurs in a list of tribes between Cappadocia and Ionia; and *Oparda* is considered to be the Persian form of *Sardis* (see Schrader, 'Keilinschr.,' p. 445, etc.). A further confirmation of this identification is found in the complaint of Joel (iii. 6 [iv. 6, Hebrew]), that the Phœnicians had sold Israelites "unto the sons of the Grecians." Professor Sayce, in a note to G. Smith's 'History of Babylonia,' p. 156, places "Saparda" on the Black Sea. It may be questioned, however, whether some town nearer Judæa is not intended. Ewald would read "Sepharam," a town in North Palestine. The two bodies of captives shall possess the cities of the south. The Negeb. The cities are named in Josh. xix.

Ver. 21.—§ 2. The prophet sums up his prediction: with the conquest of the Gentiles *salvation shall come to Zion in all its fulness*. Saviours. The LXX. incorrectly takes the word passively, translating it *ἀσσωόμενοι*, "they that are saved;" so Aquila, Theodotion, and the Syriac; Symmachus rightly, *σώζοντες*: Vulgate, *salvatores*. The judges are so called in Judg. iii. 9, 15 (comp. 2 Kings xiii. 5; Neh. ix. 27). The judges had a twofold character—they were deliverers and governors, as in

the present case. Here the immediate reference is to Zerubbabel and the valiant Maccabees, who severely punished the Idumeans (2 Macc. x. 15, etc.; Josephus, 'Ant.,' xiii. 9. 1). But all these "saviours" are types and forerunners of the Messiah, "the Saviour which is Christ the Lord." *Shall come up*. Not from exile, but simply as ascending a hill, and taking their seat there. Mount Zion. The seat of the kingdom of God, in contrast with "the mount of Esau," the type of the enemies of Israel and of God. To judge; LXX., *τοῦ ἐκδικῆσαι*, "to take vengeance on." But the "judging" is not only the taking of vengeance on Edom and that which it represents, the expression includes the notion of governing; so that the prophet looks forward to the time when the heathen shall submit themselves to the dominion of the people of God, and, as the following clause foretells, "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ" (Rev. xi. 15). The kingdom shall be the Lord's. No earthly accomplishment could fulfil this great announcement. The kingdom can be Jehovah's; he can show himself as Ruler of the world, and be acknowledged as such by the nations, only under Christ. This is "the sceptre of Judah" of which Jacob spoke (Gen. xlix. 10); this is the throne of David which was to be established for ever (2 Sam. vii. 16); this is what all the prophets foresaw, what we are still expecting, what we daily pray for, as we say, "thy kingdom come"—when "the Lord shall be King over all the earth, and there shall be one Lord, and his name one" (Zech. xiv. 9).

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*The servant of Jehovah*. The names given by the Hebrews were usually significant. The appellation of this prophet was very commonly used, and is indicative of the fervid and practical piety of the Israelitish people. Obadiah means "the Servant or Worshipper of Jehovah."

I. THE NAME IS DESCRIPTIVE OF PERSONAL PIETY. Whilst the ungodly and irreligious are servants of sin, the pious are emphatically the Lord's bondsmen and devotees. 1. Piety involves relation to a living God. The personality of the Deity is assumed in this designation. 2. Piety is practical in its character. The Lord's people offer service to him whom they profess to revere, consecrating their powers to secure the ends which are approved by him. 3. Piety is voluntary and cheerful in its nature. In a sense all men are under Divine authority. But the giving of a name like this implies a distinction among men, a willing devotion on the part of the pious to the holy service of the Supreme.

II. THE NAME IS DESCRIPTIVE OF OFFICIAL RELATION AND ACTIVITY. It is true that there are those who are incapacitated for service, who yet are God's in heart. "They also serve who only stand and wait." Yet, in the case of men possessed of ordinary faculties, and enjoying ordinary opportunities, the felt obligation will express itself in obedience and in zeal and energy. 1. The servant of the Lord receives his

instructions from his Master, with whom he is in intimate communication. 2. The servant of the Lord is the agent in conveying the Master's will to his fellow-men. This was especially the vocation of the prophet, who spoke forth the mind of the Almighty to the righteous and to the wicked, whether they would hear or forbear.

Ver. 1.—*The vision.* The designation sometimes given to the prophet, "the seer," corresponds with language which is in many places employed to denote the act of communion with God, by which the honoured servant was qualified for discharging his sacred office. The process and its results are thus brought very strikingly before our mind.

I. THE REVELATION. There is something to be seen, something which is hidden from the minds of ordinary men, something from which, therefore, the veil must be withdrawn, if the spiritual eye is to gaze upon it. How God makes himself, his character, his purposes, known to those whom he selects for this special privilege, we do not know. But, unless Scripture is misleading and deceptive, such a revelation has taken place. Especially to the prophets, things otherwise unseen, unknown, have been revealed.

II. THE INSIGHT. Unless there is an eye, the light shines in vain; indeed, light is but an undulation of ether which it needs the susceptible optic nerve to appreciate. And in order that God may make his counsels known to men, there must be not only objective revelation, but subjective inspiration. The spiritual faculty needs to be quickened, that in God's light we may see light. The action of the Holy Spirit upon the mind of the prophet brought that mind into a receptive state, so that the Divine rays occasioned human illumination. The prophet *saw* the mind, the will, the intentions, of the Eternal.

III. THE PROPHECY. Because the spiritual eye discerned the spiritual reality, the seer became the prophet. What his eyes had seen he was thus enabled to communicate for the information, the warning, the encouragement, of his fellow-men.

Vers. 3, 4.—*The deceptiveness of human pride.* The prophecies of Obadiah were mainly addressed to the Edomites, the descendants of Esau, a wild and warlike people who inhabited the mountainous region to the south of the Dead Sea. Their hostility and treachery towards their kinsmen, the descendants of Israel, were the occasion of the threatenings with which this book abounds. Fancying themselves secure and impregnable in their singular mountain fastnesses, they deemed their neighbours altogether incapable of chastising their perfidy and enmity. But man is only man, and not God; and this lesson Obadiah brings before the inhabitants of Idumea in the glowing and poetical language of the text.

I. SELF-EXALTATION. This was the state of mind in which the Edomites defied the people of Jehovah. Their homes were literally in the clefts of the rocks, where caves sheltered them at an elevation above those passing through the defile below, which seemed to secure their exemption from the assaults of their foes. They compared themselves with the eagle, which chooses the loftiest peaks for his dwelling-place. Nay, they seemed to disdain the earth, and to dwell among the stars. All this is indicative of human pride. Men too often flatter themselves that physical strength, mental powers, social position, political alliances, raising them above the common herd, raise them also above the common lot.

II. SELF-CONFIDENCE. "Who," say the Edomites, "who shall bring us down to the ground?" Men measure their strength with their fellow-men, and draw from the comparison most delusive conclusions. Because they are superior to one, they fancy themselves superior to all; and because they believe themselves above the reach of human enemies, they believe themselves above the reach of God himself. It is a sin to which strong natures are especially exposed. The powerful and the prosperous are tempted to place confidence both in their own wisdom and ability and in their own good fortune. But "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

III. HUMILIATION. We are assured upon the highest authority that "a haughty spirit cometh before a fall." In the plenitude of their power and pride, the Edomites heard a voice from heaven saying, "I will bring thee down." A retributive providence is a reality. Even the heathen believed in Nemesis, and regarded boastfulness as

tempting adversity. The instrument employed in humbling the proud may be human, as in the case of the Edomites, but the power that chastises is Divine. It is ever true under the government of God that he abases the proud and gives grace unto the lowly.

Ver. 7.—*The treacherous betrayed.* The Edomites had turned against their own kinsmen, the children of Israel, had leagued with Israel's enemies, and aided in bringing about Israel's calamities. They had chosen for their allies heathen nations in their own vicinity, relying upon their fidelity and support. The prophet is inspired to assure them that the confederacies they have formed shall fail them, that the friends in whom they have trusted shall prove false, and that Edom shall suffer the reward of perfidy in desertion and subjection.

I. TO DESERT AND TO INJURE THE FRIENDS OF GOD IS TO INCUR THE DISPLEASURE OF GOD. The sons of Israel were the chosen and beloved people, and, notwithstanding their frequent unfaithfulness, they were the objects of Divine regard and interest and love. Those who attacked the Israelites attacked him who was in reality their King. Israel was a theocracy, and the anger of the King was enkindled against those who, like these Edomites, treated with injustice the beloved nation.

II. TO FORM A LEAGUE WITH GOD'S ENEMIES WILL NEVER CONDUCE TO PROSPERITY: THEY WILL BECOME INSTRUMENTS OF DIVINE RETRIBUTION. The Edomites were attacked, wounded, disgraced, and despised by the very people whose friendship they had courted in preference to that of God's own chosen nation. Their confidence was in vain; the prop upon which they leaned proved a spear to pierce them. Their fancied wisdom brought them to utter perplexity and ruin.

APPLICATION. No alliance with wicked men can serve any holy purpose. It may promise well, but the reality will not correspond with the promise. The friendship of sinners is illusive, seductive, and vain. "The companion of fools shall be destroyed."

Vers. 8, 9.—*Wisdom and power of no avail against God.* Of all their possessions men are most prone to rely upon and to boast of their physical prowess and their intellectual sagacity. It is thought that great power, directed by consummate prudence and wisdom, is of all things earthly the most trustworthy, the most unailing. Yet warnings are in Scripture often addressed to men to dissuade them from an undue confidence even in gifts and qualities so rare and admirable as these. The sons of Esau are in this passage admonished that, if they trust to their own wisdom and their own strength for safety, protection, and deliverance, their trust shall be disappointed.

I. HUMAN POWER AND WISDOM ARE ALWAYS IN THEMSELVES VERY LIMITED. What is the might of man when compared with the great forces of nature—the earthquake, the tempestuous sea, etc.? And before how many speculative difficulties and practical problems does the wisdom of man confess itself utterly baffled! It is strange that whilst, looking at the general law, men are always ready to confess their physical and intellectual impotency, when they come to particular cases calling for strength and wisdom they are so ready to confide in that which they have every reason to distrust.

II. HUMAN POWER AND WISDOM ARE OFTEN MISDIRECTED. Good in themselves, and admirable instances of the creative skill of God himself, these qualities are especially liable to abuse. Such is the case when power is employed in the cause of injustice and oppression, when wisdom is misused to defeat the designs of truth and charity. Often in the history of other nations than Edom has this misuse been exhibited. We are too prone to admire and extol strength and sagacity superior to our own; but it is better to ask—How have these gifts been used? By what principles have they been guided?

III. HUMAN POWER AND WISDOM WILL CERTAINLY BE BROUGHT TO NOTHING IF OPPOSED TO THE COUNSELS OF GOD. Man's power may be great; God's is irresistible. Man's wisdom may be profound, but God's is omniscient. Hence when that which is finite opposes itself to that which is infinite, the result can only be disastrous for man. Edom found this to be so; and the experience of Edom has been the experience of multitudes in every age.

APPLICATION. "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty

man glory in his might; . . . but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth."

Vers. 10—14.—*A neighbour's cruelty.* The prophet deeply feels the injury which Esau has inflicted upon Israel, and the language of this passage gives evidence of a heart deeply aggrieved and wronged and distressed. We have, indeed, in these verses an example of the length to which the cruelty of man can go.

I. THE DETAILS OF THIS CRUELTY. 1. Edom is charged with siding with foreigners against Jerusalem in the day when the city was assaulted and taken. 2. And with rejoicing over Judah's misfortunes, and mocking at her calamities. 3. And with sharing in the spoils of the city when the capture took place. 4. And even with cutting off the retreat of the wretched fugitives.

II. THE AGGRAVATION OF THIS CRUELTY. If a stranger, a "natural enemy" (as men say), had done this, it would have been bad enough. But the Edomites were of the same descent with the Jews; these being sons of Jacob, those of Esau. The point is given to the sting by this fact. It is with "violence against thy brother Jacob" that Edom is charged. "Man's inhumanity to man" is the most sad and depressing spectacle that earth affords. When natural kindred and affinity bind men together, those who snap those ties and assail their brethren are monsters of iniquity.

III. THE PENALTY OF THIS CRUELTY. This was plainly published by Obadiah. "Thou," said he to Edom—"thou shalt be cut off for ever." The laws of God cannot be violated with impunity. The relations which God has fashioned cannot be outraged without involving the guilty in the awful consequences of their sin. "The way of transgressors is hard."

Vers. 15, 16.—*The "lex talionis."* The principle of government or of retribution known as the *lex talionis* was known to the Hebrews as well as to other nations. "It was said by them of old time, An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." Passages in Ezekiel contain threatenings of a retribution similar to that which in this passage is denounced upon Edom.

I. THE AUTHOR AND THE OCCASION OF THIS RETRIBUTION. "The day of the Lord" is an expression frequently occurring in the prophetic writings, and always denoting a season of retribution appointed by a righteous God. The day when iniquity is rampant, when injustice is perpetrated and is apparently unnoticed, is the day of *man*. But as surely as the universe is governed by a Being of rectitude, so surely shall the cause of equity and truth be vindicated; and the time of such vindication, come when it may, is the day of the *Lord*.

II. THE METHOD AND MEASURE OF RETRIBUTION. "As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee." Edom had deserted her friends; she should be deserted. Edom had spoiled her neighbours; she should be spoiled. And this doom was threatened, not upon Edom only, but upon "all the heathen," i.e. upon all who shared Edom's guilt. Whether this was to happen by the working out of what we call a natural law, or by a special interposition of Providence, we are not told, and this is immaterial. History records very many instances in which this principle has operated, in which this doom has been inflicted.

III. THE HIGHER DIVINE PRINCIPLE WHICH TEMPER THIS OF RETRIBUTION. Our Lord Jesus has taught us that the *lex talionis* is not an adequate principle of human conduct. Much less can it be deemed the perfect and final law of the Divine government. Mercy triumphs over wrath. Where there is true repentance on man's part, there is ready forgiveness on God's part. If this were not so, the human race would long ago have perished; if this were not so, we should not now be rejoicing in the Saviour of our souls, the Saviour of mankind.

Ver. 17.—*Restoration.* It is a peculiarity of the Hebrew prophets that, however gloomy might seem to them the immediate future of their nation, they ever saw beyond the darkness into the glorious light of the future. Opinions have differed, and still differ, as to the reference of many of their predictions of coming prosperity and blessedness. Some refer those visions to a time not long subsequent to the prophet's

own time. Others still look for their literal fulfilment in the political history of Israel in the future. Whilst others believe that the visions were not of mere earthly peace and prosperity, but of the spiritual kingdom of Christ and of the true Israel of God, the Church of the living God. Certainly such language as that of the text, whatever be its literal application, contains promises which Christians alone can fully realize.

I. ONE ELEMENT IN RESTORATION IS DELIVERANCE. The return of the captives and exiles to their native soil, their much-loved city, is a picture of the restoration of sinners to the favour and fellowship of the God whom they had angered and alienated. God deviseth means whereby his banished ones shall return. Christ is the Redeemer, and deliverance is his great work. His people are the saved, the rescued, the emancipated, the restored.

II. ANOTHER ELEMENT IN RESTORATION IS HOLINESS. The captivity of the Jews had removed them from their metropolis and from their temple, the holy place of their God. At the same time, the heathen had polluted and defiled the sanctuary of Jehovah. The return from exile was to be the occasion of the restoration of the holy people to the holy house, and the restoration of the sanctuary to its sacred uses. In the Church of the Redeemer the Spirit of holiness takes up his abode. It is filled with sacred services and observances. "Holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, for ever."

III. ANOTHER ELEMENT IN RESTORATION IS THE ENJOYMENT OF SECURITY AND PLENTY. "The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions." The lands and houses which the people had inherited from their forefathers had been occupied by strangers. But upon the restoration the Hebrews took possession of their ancient homes and fields, and abode in peace and enjoyed plenty. In this their position was an emblem of that into which Christ's redeemed people are introduced by his grace. All things are theirs. They possess the privileges of the gospel and the peace of the Spirit, and theirs is the blessed hope of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading.

Ver. 21.—*Empire founded on salvation.* The two conceptions which are united in this verse are united, not only in the history of Judah, but in the dispensation of Divine grace as revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Israel had many saviours; Moses was the first and greatest; the judges followed. In the later periods of Jewish story, Zerubbabel and Judas Maccabæus wrought somewhat similar deliverance for their countrymen. In fact, from first to last revelation is the history of salvations, all pointing on to the one great salvation to be wrought, not for one nation only, but for all mankind. And as the Hebrew deliverers established the kingdom, and brought about the reign of righteousness and the prevalence of peace, so upon his great work of deliverance by Christ God has founded that kingdom which is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

I. CHRIST IS A SAVIOUR WITH A VIEW TO HIS BEING A KING. His earthly manifestation was as a pitying Deliverer; his heavenly session is as a mighty Lord. In a sense, he purchased his dominion by his sacrificial death.

II. CHRIST'S PEOPLE ARE SAVED IN ORDER THAT THEY MAY BE SUBJECTS. In the first instance, those who receive the gospel behold Christ as a Redeemer. But in saving them the Lord acquires rights over them; these rights they recognize, and their subjection and obedience become the note of their interest in his redemption.

III. THE EARTH IS THE SCENE OF A SAVIOUR'S GRACE THAT IT MAY BECOME THE SEAT OF HIS EMPIRE. From Zion Jehovah judged the mount of Esau. God gives to his Son the heathen for his inheritance. Not by a physical, a military, but by a moral conquest Christ takes possession of our humanity. And he is Lord of all.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The vision of Obadiah.* "The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord God concerning Edom; We have heard a rumour from the Lord, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle. Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised." We are now about to study the smallest book in the Old Testament. It comes behind the others in length, but in nothing else. In its weighty character as an inspired writing it is

equal to any of the rest. Let us, then, ponder it in our hearts. May the Holy Spirit guide us into all the truth this sacred portion contains! May he open our eyes, that we may behold wondrous things out of this word!

I. WE MAY BEGIN BY ASKING WHO OBADIAH WAS. Some have thought he was the pious steward of King Ahab; but this idea is not in keeping with the evident date of the prophecy. There are many other persons of this name in Scripture, but the prophet cannot be identified with any one of them. We read of Obadiah of the tribe of Judah (1 Chron. iii.); another of the tribe of Issachar (1 Chron. vii.); another of Benjamin (1 Chron. viii.); another of Levi (1 Chron. ix.); another of Gad (1 Chron. xii.); another of Judah (2 Chron. xvii.); another of Zebulun (1 Chron. xxvii.). We find, also, an Obadiah—a Levite—in the time of Josiah (2 Chron. xxxiv.); another a companion of Ezra (Ezra viii.); and yet another a priest in the time of Nehemiah (Neh. x.). The name, therefore, was in very common use among the Jews; and this, not only because it had been borne by some who were distinguished for their upright character, but because it had a most instructive significance.

II. WE ASK THE MEANING OF THE NAME. It means "a Servant," or "a Worshipper of the Lord." Let us note the import of both these. 1. "*A Servant of the Lord.*" Here we may each long to be similarly designated. David said, "O Lord, I am thy servant;" and the reason he gave for this was that his bonds had been broken by God. "Thou hast redeemed me from the slavery of Satan. Thou hast brought me into the glorious liberty of thy people. I now yield myself to thee. I am thy servant." And so Moses was called "the servant of God." And so, too, we meet with such words as these: "Abraham, my servant;" "David, my servant;" "Daniel, servant of the living God;" "James, a servant of God;" "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ." This blessed service is perfect freedom. Christ himself came among us as the girded Servant. "I am among you as he that serveth." He was Jehovah's righteous Servant. His disciples, therefore, can never rise above his example. They serve the living and true God. "Ich dien." It was not always so. Before the bonds were loosed there was only slavery to sin and Satan and the world, but the emancipation has come. The freed ones serve their Redeemer-God. In faith, in love, in holiness, in patience, in meekness, in joyfulness, they serve, they work, they wait. 2. The second meaning of the name is "*a Worshipper of the Lord.*" And shall we not, every one, aim to be this? It implies much. Let us think about it. In New Testament light, worship means *access to God*. We are brought near by the blood of Christ's cross. It is *filial nearness*. We may come with holy boldness by the blood of Jesus. It includes *prayer* in Christ's Name. "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my Name, he will give it you. Ask, and ye shall receive." Worship includes *praise*. "Whoso offereth me praise, he glorifieth me;" "Praise is comely;" "Praise ye the Lord." Worship includes the *yielding of ourselves to God*. "I beseech you by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies living sacrifices." Worship includes the *consecration of our substance to God*. Of old his people were told not to come before him empty. They were to present their firstfruits unto him. They were first to consecrate, then enjoy. Giving was therefore a part of worship. It ought to be so now. Worship of Jehovah also involves a complete turning away from idols. There are idols of the heart. Covetousness is idolatry. There are many idols besides those of wood and stone. To be truly an Obadiah, a worshipper of Jehovah, we must say with Ephraim, "What have I to do any more with idols?" And one thought more on this point. In seeking to bear the designation of our prophet, let us remember this canon laid down by the blessed Saviour: "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him *in spirit and in truth.*" Thus, then, we see that much is implied by the designation, "a worshipper of the Lord." May we each be both "a servant" and "a worshipper" of the living God!

III. We may now proceed to observe that THE GREAT AUTHOR OF THE BOOK IS GOD HIMSELF. Obadiah was the ambassador, the messenger, but the words are God's. Ver. 1, "Thus saith the Lord God." It is this "*Thus saith the Lord*" which gives such supreme importance to every word of the Bible. The histories, the prophecies, the precepts, the invitations, the warnings, the exhortations, the revelations, the whole from Genesis to the end, all come to us with the words of power, "Thus saith the Lord." Some minds may be perplexed as to what is said of creation; some are

exercised as to what is revealed about the judgment day, and of the Divine wrath upon the wicked; others have difficulty in understanding the moral government of the world; but the docile, humble-minded believer takes this book as from the hand of God. On the top of every page he sees, as it were, written in letters of golden light, "Thus saith the Lord." Where the word of a king is there is power. We have here the words of the King of kings. "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." That same Word upholds all things by its glorious power. And here we have that Word in writing, and it is God's great revelation of his will. It is the chief means by which the Holy Spirit quickens the dead in trespasses and sins, and revives the drooping graces of his saints. "By thy Word thou hast quickened me." If you want any other proof of the power of the Word, read in the Revelation of the doings of him who was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood, and whose name is "The Word of God." St. John was inspired to write five books. In the opening chapter of the first he describes the Word made flesh, and dwelling among us. In the closing chapters of the last book he describes the Word in the blood-dyed vesture. It is the union of these truths which gives such power to the written Word. God has spoken to us by his Son. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Let us, then, take heed how we hear. We all need to be attentive to the Word. Oh that Christ's high-priestly prayer were true of each of us, "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them. . . . Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth"! Let us seek to "receive" all the words which have been given us. "*They have received them.*" May this be true of us, and may we be *sanctified* more and more by the Word! "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth."

IV. And now let us ask—WHAT IS THE SUBJECT OF THIS PROPHETIC BOOK? It is twofold. It tells of *judgment* upon the house of Esau, and *mercy* upon the house of Jacob. We shall hope to return to this subject again, but for the present let us note what a summary we have here of all revelation. We have, as it were, the pillar of the Lord—a light to Israel, a black cloud to the Egyptians. "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be condemned." The righteous shall walk therein; the transgressors shall fall therein. Esau, despising his birthright, barters it for a mess of pottage. Jacob, taking hold of God's strength, wrestles with the angel of the covenant, and is called Israel; for as a prince he has wrestled with God, and prevailed. In the one case we see wickedness apparently mighty and dominant, building on the heights, but brought down and made very small. In the other we have Zion, once feeble and down-trodden and despised, made triumphant and glorious by the grace, and love, and wisdom, and power of him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us priests and kings unto God. If we notice the story of Esau, we see him in Genesis despising his birthright and hating his brother. In Numbers we see the two nations. Israel is marching to Canaan. Esau withstands him. The King of Edom prevents the progress. In this Edom seems the stronger. In St. Matthew's Gospel we note the birth of Christ and the advance of the spiritual Israel. Then we find Herod the Edomite opposing with no little success. He commands the destruction of all the young children in Bethlehem. A true Edomite—a red man—a man of blood. But as we get to the close of the sacred Word we see that the house of Esau has disappeared. Zion is all-triumphant. Within the pearly gates all is joy, and light, and rest, and glory for evermore. Nothing that defileth can enter. The hosts of the true Israel are safe for ever. The great "Thus saith the Lord" by Obadiah the prophet has received its complete fulfilment. Let us, then, be sure of this—that whatever seeming strength falsehood and wickedness may possess, in the end truth only shall prevail; the kingdom which is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" only shall predominate, and in a little while it shall be known that "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." "The kingdom shall be the Lord's" (ver. 21).—A. C. T.

Vers. 1-4.—*Edom subdued.* "The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord God concerning Edom; We have heard a rumour from the Lord," etc. We have said that, although there are so many Obadias mentioned in Scripture, the prophet cannot be identified with any of them. The sacred writers were never ready to put themselves

into prominence. They had their message to deliver. They had their solemn work to perform. They had Jehovah to glorify. They were content to be no more than a voice crying in the wilderness. Who wrote Joshua? Who wrote Judges? Who wrote the books of Samuel, or the Kings, or Chronicles, or Esther? It was sufficient for the writers that they were used by the Spirit of God. They were ambassadors, not kings. They were servants, not masters. They were the instruments, not the musicians. They were the vessels, not the fountain of living water. The ambassador simply delivers the message of the king. The servant only waits on the guests of the master. The instrument merely gives forth the sounds struck by the musician. The vessel only bears the refreshing draught of the well of life. Obadiah, like John the Baptist, was ready to decrease, that Christ might increase. The morning star heralds the day, then melts before the sunshine. Herein is a lesson of great importance to all workers for Christ.

I. Let us proceed to notice God's DENUNCIATION OF EDM. Edom was a great adversary of Israel. For instance, we find in Ps. cxxxvii. that Edom joined Babylon in seeking the destruction of Jerusalem: ver. 7, "Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof!" The geographical position of Edom made it a formidable enemy, and apparently invincible. Lying south of the Dead Sea, its lofty range of red hills, called Mount Seir, stretched a hundred miles from north to south, by twenty east to west. Bozrah was the capital of the eastern division, and Sela, or Petra (both names mean "a rock"), was the capital of the southern division. The habit of the eagle to select high and lonely pinnacles for its dwelling-place gives force to the words of our fourth verse, "Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down." In Ps. lx. 9 we are led to a period in David's history when that king besieged Edom. As he looks up at the fortified cities among impregnable rocky heights, he seems to despair of victory. "Who will bring me into the strong city? Who will lead me into Edom?" Could he not himself be the leader? Had he not slain Goliath and routed the Philistines? Had he not fought with the lion and the bear to save a lamb of the fold? Where, too, were his mighty men?—Joab, captain of the host? Adino, who lifted his spear against eight hundred? Eleazar, whose sword imbedded itself in his hand? Benaiah, who slew an Egyptian with his own spear? If the muster-roll be called, is there no one to take the lead, and scale the dizzy heights, and subdue the great strongholds? David looks away from himself, away from his men, away from all human strength, and he says, "Wilt not thou, O God?" He answers the question in the best and surest way. And we know that God *did* give David the victory (see 2 Sam. viii. 14). We, too, have our enemies. We have our fortresses of Edom. Who will enable us to conquer? Where are the weapons mighty to the pulling down of strongholds? Nay, where is he whose goings forth are upon the white horse of war, conquering and to conquer? The answer is brought to us. The warfare is accomplished. "We are more than conquerors through him who loved us." Isa. lxiii. 1, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?" Then comes the answer. "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Yes, he who is the Lord our Righteousness is the Lord our Saviour—mighty to save to the uttermost. Sin and Satan have been conquered. Edom is subdued. Then comes forth the Conqueror, red in his apparel. "Who is this... with dyed garments from Bozrah? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save."

II. I will ask you now to pass from the general denunciation of Edom to THE PARTICULAR SIN WITH WHICH EDM IS CHARGED. "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee." Building like the eagle in the pinnacles of the rocks, setting his nest among the stars, Edom said in his heart, "Who shall bring me down to the ground?" Thus the pride of his heart deceived him. And to many individuals, as well as nations, does the herald of Jehovah bring the message, "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee." Pharaoh, lifting himself high, asks, "Who is the Lord, that I should serve him?" The answer comes, "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee." Nebuchadnezzar, looking in self-elation upon Babylon, asks, "Is not this great Babylon which I have built?" The answer comes, "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee." Belshazzar, banqueting with his lords, and drinking wine from the vessels of

the temple, sees the dreadful handwriting upon the wall, and the message comes, "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee." Herod makes an oration, and gives not God the glory due to his Name. The silent death-warrant comes to him, "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee." And as with these kings, these representatives of multitudes, so with all classes. The commercial man, gathering wealth and speculating in the markets, suddenly comes down with a crash: the pride of his heart hath deceived him. The professional man, scorning many an honest tradesman, runs into lavish expense, and brings ruin to his family: the pride of his heart hath deceived him. The young man coming into a small estate suddenly launches out into extravagance. He must be as others who have twice his income. He wants to make a dash in the world. He knows more about horses than the way of holiness and the gospel of salvation. He is a stranger to grace. The throne of grace, the covenant of grace, the God of all grace, he knows nothing about. With scarcely twenty-four hours' illness, he is summoned into eternity. He dies without hope. The pride of his heart hath deceived him. The man of high culture, priding himself upon his intellectual attainments, ignoring Bible revelation, and spurning sermons and tracts, he is ready to laugh at humble piety. His habitation is high. He dwells amongst the stars. His nest is with the eagles. He saith in his heart, "Who shall bring me down to the ground?" But what does God say? "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee." Ay, and there is a moral man, a very Pharisee, who thanks God he is so much better than the publicans and the like. That man is lifted up with his doings. How carefully he pays tithe of his mint, anise, and cummin! How scrupulous about his phylactery! What a parade he makes of his religion! He says in his heart, "Who shall bring me down to the ground?" So the pride of his heart hath deceived him. He that exalteth himself shall be abased. We do well to remember Edom. We must keep in mind that pride of heart is very deceitful. Nature's fortifications, the world's fortifications, social fortifications, moral fortifications, are unavailing if we presume to do without God. Edom built among the stars, but God brought him down to the ground. Pride of heart is the herald of ruin. It is often so even in this world. And those proud ones who are brought to the ground here *may thank God for the valley of humiliation*. Let us all learn to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt us in due time. Let us be clothed with humility. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." The only fortress we can boast of is the cleft Rock of Ages. Here we have safety and joy and peace. Here we may securely hide until all calamities be overpast. Happy those who can say with David, in Ps. ix., "In the Lord put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?" The true believer needs no foreign helps. The Lord is an all-sufficient Fortress and Shield. The Christian knows whom he trusts, and therefore does not make haste. "With Jehovah I have taken shelter: how say ye to my soul, Flee, sparrows, to your hill?" (Bishop Horsley). May the Holy Spirit give us all to know this happy security!—a security which made the Apostle Paul speak with so much meaning, so much force, so much personal experience, "I knew a man in Christ." A delightful, peaceful knowledge. Only one thing is better. "To depart and to be *with Christ* . . . is far better."—A. C. T.

Ver. 6.—"*The things of Esau searched out.*" "How are the things of Esau searched out!"

I. We may consider ESAU AS THE TYPE OF THE SELF-CONFIDENT. Lifted up, dwelling amongst the stars, wise in his own eyes, he knows not his perilous condition. There are thousands and thousands like this. They say, in the language of Laodicea, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." They little see themselves as God sees them. They are blind, and know not that they are miserable and poor; but God searches them out. "I know thy works." No one can elude the all-seeing gaze of the Omniscient. "Adam, where art thou?" Thus the Judge of all men comes making manifest the secrets of the heart. Hiding like Adam in the trees of the garden, or dwelling like Edom in the rocks, is only self-delusion. Shall not God search it out? There are many, like Saul, who are so self-complacent that they say, "I have kept the commandment of the Lord." When the stern prophet asks, "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which

I hear?" Some may remind us of the young man who, on hearing the commandments, said he had kept them all; but when Christ searched him through and through, he left Christ's presence, preferring his earthly possessions to heavenly riches. His heart was as a great stone, which, when disturbed, revealed numberless creeping things which at once shrank from the light and hastened away into new darkness. How are the things of Esau searched out! The disclosure must come. It is inevitable. "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be known." It may not be in this world, it may not be until the day—the great day—of judgment, but it *must* come. The things of Esau must be searched out, the folly of self-confidence must be made manifest.

II. In the next place, we may consider ESAU AS THE TYPE OF THE WORLDLY. We know how the first of the race bartered his birthright for a mess of pottage. And the race yet lives. There are yet multitudes carnally minded, who reject joint kinship with Christ for the sake of some mess of pottage, or some cup of pleasure, or some glittering toy, or the incense of human honour. How many are ready to exclaim, when we offer them the religion of Christ, that it would endanger their success in the world! So Demetrius, the silversmith, alarmed his fellow-craftsman by telling them that Christianity would jeopardize their profits. "Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth." The world so fills the vision of such persons that they have no eyes for Christ, no eyes for heaven, no eyes for the coming glory, no eyes for immortality. They have eyes and see not; ears have they, and hear not. Like the raven in the Flood, they prefer the dead carcasses to the security of the ark. Like Ishmael, they are ready to mock at those who differ from them. They ridicule the walk of faith. The cross of Christ is to them foolishness. Shall not God visit for these things? To be carnally minded is *death*. They are like the fabled vessel drawing nigh to the loadstone rock. They get nearer and nearer, when, lo! every bolt and nail is drawn out to the magnet, and the ship is an utter wreck. "How are the things of Esau searched out!" The worldly policy of multitudes may seem for a while to prosper, but the end of these things is death. Some years ago a woman was executed for murder. The fatal deed had been committed to obtain a five-pound note. When the coveted note was gained it was found to be only a pretence. It was called a five-pound "Bank of Elegance" note. Yet for this poor sham the miserable young woman risked her life and took the life of another. What an illustration of Esau's barter—a birthright for a mess of pottage! An inheritance incorruptible is forfeited for some gilded toy. "The wages of sin is death." "How are the things of Esau searched out!"

III. In the next place, we may consider ESAU AS THE TYPE OF THE UNSYMPATHIZING AND CRUEL. In ver. 10 the prophet says, "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever." This unsympathizing, hard-hearted, cruel spirit is directly opposite to that of Christ. The laws of the kingdom call to gentleness, meekness, brotherly kindness, charity. Christ hath left us an example, that we should follow his steps. He is the gentle Jesus. He is the tender Shepherd. He is the Brother born for adversity. He gave *himself* for us. His mercy is everlasting. He is the sympathizing High Priest. It is clear, then, that the sin of Esau was very great. Jacob from his dying couch denounced the cruelty of Simeon and Levi, although by grace the latter was called to high privileges in Israel. "Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united!" And in a little while he adds, "Cursed be their anger, for it was great, and their wrath, for it was cruel." But here we have the inveterate cruelty of centuries. The hatred of Esau against Israel had survived many generations. An unyielding, deadly, cruel antagonism to the Jews had been a leading characteristic of Edom. Esau's cruelty was of a most unnatural type. And it had grown worse and worse. The prophet tells us he first looked on Jacob's calamity, then laughed, then insulted, then plundered, and then imprisoned and murdered. We have, then, in Esau a type of the unsympathizing and cruel. And is not the red hand of Esau, the cruel, blood-dyed hand of Esau, at work in our own day? What are the fearful atrocities, the horrible cruelties, the maimings, the murders, the hellish plots, the demon-like machinations? What mean the heart-rending tears and sorrows of widows and orphans? What mean the distress and poverty of multitudes of ladies—Ireland's matrons and daughters? What mean the

blight and ruin so common in the land? O my soul, come not thou into the secret! Esau's cruelty and blood-guiltiness were never so bad as the crimes, unpunished and undetected, of our own day. And shall not God search them out? "Verily there is a God that judgeth the earth." Let us for ourselves pray to be kept from the beginnings of all hatred, malice, and uncharitableness. God is love. May we have his mind! May we show ourselves the children of him who maketh his sun to shine on the just and on the unjust! "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? . . . Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."—A. C. T.

Ver. 7.—*Unholy alliances.* "All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; they that eat thy bread have laid a wound under thee." Companionship is of Divine appointment. The Lord God chose it in his wisdom for *himself*, and so created angels and men. He might have lived in majestic solitude, in all the sublimity of his one eternal presence; but no, he created angels that excel in strength, hearkening to the voice of his word, and he made man in his own likeness. Companionship, then, is after the Divine mind. Of the first Adam God said, "It is not good for man to be alone." Of the second Adam it is written, "Of him the whole family in heaven and earth is named." So with wisdom of meaning the psalmist declares that "he setteth the solitary in families." We know the value of association. Individuals make up households, households linked together make up kingdoms, and kingdoms united are a bulwark of society. But there are two kinds of companionship. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Our text tells us of Edom's unholy alliance, which was probably with Arabian tribes. "The men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee; . . . they that eat thy bread have laid a wound under thee." The marginal reading is more exact, "the men of thy peace . . . the men of thy bread." Here, then, was a confederacy ruinous to Edom. "All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border: the men of thy peace have deceived thee; the men of thy bread have laid a wound under thee." Edom in extremity expected help, but, instead of that, the allies send his ambassadors back to the frontier, as much as to say, "Shift for yourselves. We are not going to help you. Look within your own borders." And thus, too late, Edom sees the folly of confederacy with Arab tribes. Now he is held up to us as a beacon of warning, assuring us of the disappointing character of worldly confederacy. "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord" (Jer. xvii. 5). Esau had been like a weak clematis clinging to a broken reed. In the time of the storm the feebleness of the support was manifest. They only are safe who can say, "The Lord is my Stay." Esau had rejected the Lord, and therefore, although exalted amongst the stars, was brought down to the ground. The men of his peace had deceived him. The men of his bread had laid a wound under him. Would that nations and individuals acknowledged in life and practice that salvation is of the Lord! All human alliances are poor and inadequate. In the time of our greatest need this will most be seen. Recall the dying words of Julius Cæsar to Brutus, whose wound had been the worst of all. Recall the Earl of Strafford's words, when he found the king (after many assurances that he would never do so) had signed his death-warrant, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in any of the sons of men." Recall Cardinal Wolsey's last words, "Had I but served God as faithfully as I have served my king, he would not, in mine old age, have abandoned me to my enemies." "The men of thy peace," says the prophet, "have deceived thee; the men of thy bread have laid a wound under thee." Men who refuse the help and succour of the everlasting arms, of everlasting Love, and everlasting Strength, will find that wherein they trusted a festering wound, bringing pain, and anguish, and dishonour, and shame. True union is strength, but it must be with right characters and on right principles. The ungodly are described in Prov. i. 14 as saying, "Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse." They allure to a false confederacy. Better have no purse at all than be allied to the ungodly. Look at the lonely Elijah. How sternly, how heroically, isolated! He refuses to share in the one purse of evil-doers. He will trust God for food. He who feeds the ravens can make even the

ravens feed his prophet. Elijah will not come into the secret of the wicked. Unflinching champion, he knows that the purse of the ungodly is a bag with holes, and their cisterns hold no water, and their hopes are bounded by time, and their joys are gilded and unreal; and beyond death all is darkness, darkness—densest, deepest darkness. True wealth, true joy, true greatness, true glory, are for those who are heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ. "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help . . . to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt!" There are many who do so; but what is God's message to Edom? "All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border: the men of thy peace have deceived thee; the men of thy bread have laid a wound under thee." How truly has even a heathen moralist, as well as an inspired apostle, warned us that "evil communications corrupt good manners"! In the Book of Kings we read of Jehoshaphat allying himself to Ahab in battle. It nearly cost Jehoshaphat his life. But afterwards we see that he had profited by the dear-bought experience. When he built ships to go to Ophir for gold, Ahaziah the son of Ahab said, "Let my servants go with thy servants in the ships," and Jehoshaphat would not. If we have been amongst those who have had worldly associates, let us learn wisdom. Let us walk with the wise. Let us choose for companions those who fear the Lord, and speak often one to another, to whom the Lord hearkens, and concerning whom he says, "They shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels." In Acts iv. we read that the apostles, being released from prison, went to their own company. Their absence from the godly was by restraint. Prison walls and chains kept them. As soon as ever they were free to choose they went to "their own company." That company was characterized by love to Christ. It was formed of the disciples of the Crucified. Men "took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." That company had common hopes and joys and interests. Their home was heaven. Their heritage was glory. Their Father was God. The company of the Lord's people here on earth are destined to inherit everlasting felicity. The child of God, when he is set free from the last ties that bind him to earth, goes to his "own company;" he goes to heaven, where Christ is gathering to himself those who have made a covenant with him by sacrifice. Let us ask ourselves about the companions of our life's pathway. Let us remember the folly of Edom, and let us remember the inspired counsel, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." Let us remember, too, the feast at Enrogel. In 1 Kings i. we read of the splendid entertainment given by Adonijah to his distinguished guests. Amongst those present were some who held the highest positions, military and ecclesiastical. Very merry was the gathering; very loud were the flatteries; very gratifying was everything to the prince. Surely with Joab, Abiathar, and many others on his side, he would soon wear the crown. But the banqueting is suddenly stopped. A messenger in breathless haste makes an announcement. Those who had just been shouting, "God save King Adonijah!" now undergo a change of feeling. They all rise to their feet and hasten away. The prince is left alone. His so-called friends think not of his safety, but only of their own. They all disappear. Adonijah, a short time before admired, praised, flattered, crowned, the centre of a thousand hopes, is now alone. His guests had no true affection for him. They had no bond of love to bind them. The confederacy was for their selfish ends. They fawned for place. Now they see the prince cannot help them, and so they pass away. The banquet-hall is deserted; one solitary man is riveted to the spot. The men of his confederacy have deceived him; the men of his bread have laid a wound under him. Adonijah learns too late the folly and disappointment of worldly alliances. May we all profit by the Spirit's warning! Let us resolve to follow Jesus, and unite our interests with those who are his. Once there came one to the Saviour, asking, "Master, where dwellest thou?" Jesus answered, "Come and see." Let us make for Christ's home in glory. Let us cast in our lot with his people, who through grace "come up from the wilderness, clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners."

"Come, let us join our friends above
That have obtained the prize,
And on the eagle-wings of love
To joy celestial rise.

"E'en now by faith we join our hands
With those that went before,
And greet the blood-besprinkled bands
On that eternal shore.

"Oh that we now might grasp our Guide!
Oh that the word were given!
Come, Lord of hosts, the waves divide,
And land us all in heaven."

(C. Wesley.)

A. C. T.

Vers. 8, 9.—*False confidences.* "Shall I not in that day, saith the Lord, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau? And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter." The wise, the mighty!—who shall stand when these fall? Edom made great boast of its *wise* men and its *mighty* men, but it was a vain confidence. "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." Edom was long famous for its wisdom. Eliphaz, the principal friend of the patriarch Job, was a Temanite. This Eliphaz, in some respects, was a representative of human wisdom. He oftentimes laid down false principles, or misapplied right ones, but was always ready to boast that he knew more than others. It is great folly to be wise in one's own conceits. God asks, "Shall I not destroy the wise men out of Edom?" In Jer. viii. he says, "The stork, the turtle, the crane, and the swallow observe the time of their coming, but my people know not the judgment of the Lord." How do ye say, "*We are wise*"? The birds, when the chilly winds of autumn come, take care to migrate to a warmer clime where winter will not destroy, but ye make no preparation for the future. How do ye say, "*We are wise*"? Would it be wise for a merchant never to look into his affairs? Would it be wise for a captain of a ship to see a great storm coming, and make no preparation? Would it be wise to proceed, on a long journey and have no provision? How do ye say, "*We are wise*"? There are multitudes to whom this question must be put. The vainly wise men of Edom still exist—men who might truly learn wisdom from the little things spoken of in Prov. xxx.: "The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer; the conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in rocks [they know where to hide]; the locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands [they know that unity is strength]; the lizard taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces;" it has wisdom of patient, painstaking labour. The proud self-confidence of Edom had nothing of true wisdom about it. It was displeasing to the heart-searching God. "Shall I not even destroy the wise men out of Edom?" Then, too, we have the mighty men of Teman denounced. They were of those who gloried in their might. They trusted in nature's strength. With Pharaoh, they were ready to ask, "Who is Jehovah? . . . I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil . . . I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." "Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters." With Saul, they rose, girt with strong armour and sword and spear; but the prophet comes and says, "The kingdom is given to another." With Samson, they shake themselves to put forth strength as at other times, but soon in the prison of the enemy we hear the exceeding bitter cry of the blind captive, "My weakness! my weakness!" With the Assyrian king, they exclaim, "With the multitude of my chariots I am come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon, and will cut down the tall cedars thereof, and the choice fir trees thereof: and I will enter into the lodgings of his borders, and into the forest of his Carmel." But God says, "I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle into thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest." And thus we see the vanity of the mighty man glorying in his might. "Thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed." Now, it will be asked, if the wise must not glory

in his wisdom, nor the mighty in his might, where shall we obtain a wisdom worth seeking? Where shall we find the secret of a God-given strength? I will now answer these inquiries.

I. WHERE SHALL WISDOM BE FOUND? That of Edom will not do. The wisdom of this world is insufficient for an immortal soul. We mostly need, not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, but that wisdom of God which none of the princes of this world knew, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Where shall wisdom be found? St. Paul tells us it is a revelation of the Spirit of God. Where shall wisdom be found? The Scriptures, by the power of the Spirit, "make us wise unto salvation." Behold in Jesus the Wisdom of God. Observe, we say not—See in him great wisdom, but—See in him infinite wisdom; see in him the Wisdom of God. All that can come forth from God is in the blessed Jesus. He is the Wisdom of God. In his Person you have perfect God and perfect man—the heavenly and the earthly, the perfect embodiment and revelation of Wisdom. In his Person, his words, his work, his life, death, and resurrection, behold the Wisdom of God. And remember that "he of God is made unto us Wisdom." Yes; this is the wonder of wonders, this is the gracious answer to the question, "Where shall wisdom be found?" "He of God is made unto us Wisdom;" "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, . . . but let him glory in the Lord," "who is the Wisdom of God and the Power of God."

II. THE POWER OF GOD. This will bring us to the reply to the second inquiry—Wherein may we find power? The mighty man is not to glory in his might. The *mighty* men of Teman, as well as the wise of Edom, are denounced. What is the source of strength that cannot decay? St. Paul understood when he said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." In Christ we have righteousness and strength. When we are weak in ourselves, we are strong in him. He is not only the Wisdom of God, but the Power of God. God's power to save, God's power to bless, God's power to raise, sanctify, glorify, is Christ—"Christ the Power of God." Is there a soul you want saved? Christ is the Power of God. Is there a tried and afflicted one you desire to be comforted? Christ is the Power of God. Is there one you want taught, guided, succoured, blest? Christ is the Power of God. Do you in your own soul want soul-weanedness, heavenly mindedness, spirituality? Christ is the Power of God. Do you want power to overcome, power to be holy, power to be faithful? Christ is the Power of God. Do you want fears banished, sorrow healed, anguish soothed, and death conquered? Christ is the Power of God. He must be mighty to save. He must be all—able to renew and bless. Christ is the Almighty.

III. We may now LOOK AGAIN AT OUR SCRIPTURE. We have seen that it shows the evil of all false confidence. It declares human wisdom and human power untrustworthy. It shuts us up to Christ, the Wisdom of God and Power of God. And it presses upon our hearts this important question, "What is our hope?" It calls us to see whether we are building on the mountains of Esau or the Rock of Ages. We are warned that every one of the mount of Esau shall be cut off. All refuges of lies shall be swept away. The foundation of God only standeth sure, and none other foundation can any man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Oh, let us rejoice in the sure Foundation! Let us declare plainly that all our hopes are founded on Jesus Christ, that the foundation of our trust is Christ, the foundation of our happiness is Christ, the foundation of our glorious expectations is Christ. On him as our Foundation we may rest secure. The gates of hell cannot prevail against us. The Rock of Ages is immovable, the covenant is inviolable, the promises are unalterable, and the Divine love is eternal, and when the mountains of Edom and all other false confidences shall for ever perish, "the righteous shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father for ever and ever."—A. C. T.

Vers. 10—14.—*Edom's cruelty.* Here one of the great sins of Edom is denounced in very forcible language. Notice the succession of pointed sentences. "Thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother." The *eyes* were in the transgression. Hagar, we read, could not look upon Ishmael in his distress. But Edom could look on afflicted Jacob. "Thou shouldest not have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction." The *emotions* were in the transgression. "Love rejoiceth not in iniquity." "Thou shouldest not have spoken proudly in the day of

distress." The *tongue* was in the transgression. We are told in Ps. cxxxvii. how the children of Edom cried, "Down with it, down with it, even to the ground!" "Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity." Their *feet* were in the transgression. Like those whose picture the psalmist drew, "their feet were swift to shed blood." And as their thoughts, their emotions, and their words were evil, so were their *deeds*. They were all wrong. "Thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction. Thou shouldest not have laid hand on their substance. Thou shouldest not have stood in the crossway, to cut off their escape. Thou shouldest not have delivered up thy brother a captive to his enemies." A solemn series of charges. One unbrotherly act after another. "Thou shouldest not;" "Thou shouldest not;" "Thou shouldest not." Contrast all these condemning words, "Thou shouldest not;" "Thou shouldest not," with the reiterated words of St. John in his First Epistle, "Let us love one another, for love is of God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love." We must surely feel that we want more of the spirit that St. John inculcates. Love does not flourish in the Church's garden as it ought. Envy, hatred, and malice are ever springing up, marring the plants of the Lord's own planting. What shall we think of the elder brother whose character is described in Luke xv.? Is not that unfraternal, unsympathetic, unloving elder brother yet alive? Or the priest and Levite of Luke x., are they not still amongst us? And where wounded misery lies bleeding, are not the priest and Levite found passing away on the other side? Nay, is not Edom—Edom red with blood, Edom cruel as the grave, Edom fierce and untamed as a leopard—is not Edom still alive? Who will say that the religion of Christ would not make more progress in heathendom were the whole of Christendom more under its beneficent power? We read in Numb. xx. of Edom withstanding Israel in their march to Canaan. There is much of this antagonism to the progress of truth now. Then comes the reminder of relationship, and its consequent obligations: "Thus saith thy *brother* Israel, Let us pass to Canaan through thy borders." But Edom opposes: "Thou shalt not pass through." Hatred instead of good will, resistance instead of assistance, antipathy instead of sympathy, the spirit of Edom instead of the spirit of love,—these are the baleful hindrances to the Church's progress. Contrast this character of Edom with that of Christ. In Heb. iv. 15 we are told of the fraternal sympathy of our High Priest—sympathy with our infirmities, sympathy with our sorrows, sympathy with our conflicts, sympathy with our struggles, loving, tender, brotherly sympathy. In Prov. xvii. he is called "the Brother born for adversity"—born for it. The gospel is throughout a story of a Brother born to sympathize with adversity. Young man, he has sympathy with you. Child of poverty, he has sympathy with you. Bereaved one, he has sympathy with you. Tempted one, he has sympathy with you. He is the great Sympathizer. In the ages past he was "afflicted in all their afflictions;" and now we have not a High Priest who cannot sympathize with us. See how he is presented to us in the Gospels. See him going about doing good; see him drying the widows' tears; see him healing poor lepers; see him blessing little children; see him opening blind eyes; see him raising the fallen; see him feeding the hungry; see him teaching the ignorant; see him casting out devils; see him blessing the wretched; see him saving the lost. Oh, what sympathy! Oh, what a "Brother born for adversity"! Let us follow in his steps. It must not be enough that we are unlike Nero, who sent Christians to the lions. It must not be enough that we are unlike Edom, who hated his brother Jacob. It must not be enough that we are unlike persecuting Rome in the time when God's faithful martyrs were made to seal their testimony in fire and blood. We are to be Christ-like. We are to take as our example the loving, the forgiving, the tender, the compassionate, the meek, the long-suffering *Christ*. Instead of being like Edom, whose every power went out in unfraternal cruelty, we must bring our powers, our faculties, our emotions, our hearts, our lives, to be sanctified, controlled, and governed by the Holy Spirit of Christ.—A. C. T.

Ver. 11.—*Edom as Babylon*. "Even thou wast as one of them." Edom, although claiming Abraham and Isaac for his forefathers, was so unfraternal to Israel that when Jerusalem was captured by the Babylonians, he shared in the hostility. His cry was, "Rase it, rase it, even to the ground!" To this our text makes reference. "Even thou wast as one of them." And what Obadiah thus says to Edom, he might often

stand and say to some of us. How many who have been nursed in privileges and taken a place as servants of the God of Abraham, have been found, like Balaam, amongst the enemies of the Lord! "Even *thou* wast as one of them." How often the inquiry might come to those who ought to be bearing holy witness for God, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" The words may well convey a warning to us, for even the most godly have often fallen from their steadfastness. Let us note some examples by way of fixing this warning upon our hearts.

I. WE ALL DENOUNCE DRUNKENNESS. We all sadly mourn the condition of inebriates. Alas! there was a time when Obadiah might have stood in attitude of condemnation before the Patriarch Noah, and said, "Even *thou* wast as one of them."

II. WE SCORN THE LIAR. But there was a time when Abraham became untruthful. Obadiah might have appeared before him, and said, "Even *thou* wast as one of them."

III. WE ABOMINATE IMPURITY. But there was a time when Obadiah might have stood before David, as did the Prophet Nathan, and said, "Thou art the man!" "Even *thou* wast as one of them."

IV. WE DEPLORE RASH SPEAKING AND HOT AND HASTY WORDS. Time was when Obadiah might have come to the meek and holy Moses, and said, "Even *thou* wast as one of them."

V. WE OFTEN LOOK WITH FEELINGS OF DISDAIN UPON THE PROUD. And yet there was a time when Obadiah might have said to the good King Hezekiah, "Even *thou* wast as one of them."

VI. WE ARE EVER READY TO ADMIT THE TURPITUDE OF DENYING CHRIST. But see Obadiah standing before Simon Peter, and we catch his awful words, "Even *thou* wast as one of them."

VII. CONTENTION AMONGST BRETHREN IS ANOTHER EVIL WHICH WE DEPRECATE. Obadiah might have pointed to Barnabas, the "son of consolation," and said to him, "Even *thou* wast as one of them."

VIII. THE SIN OF UNBELIEF IS ANOTHER FEARFUL EVIL. But all the early disciples fell for a time into this sin. Obadiah might have said first to one, then another, "Even *thou* wast as one of them."

IX. A MURMURING SPIRIT IS ANOTHER EVIL WHICH THE CHRISTIAN SHOULD AVOID. St. Paul learned in whatsoever state he was, therewith to be content. The psalmist says his soul was as a weaned child. But we turn to the prophet of fire. We find the great Elijah under a juniper tree, murmuring at his lot. "Even *thou* wast as one of them."

Enough. We see plainly that the Scriptures warn us of the frailty of our nature and the deceitfulness of our hearts. And, if we reflect at all, we must see that repeatedly Christian professors lack consistency. Christian principle and Christian practice should never be at variance. But what is the fact? How often the Christian in business walks so unworthy of his high calling that our prophet seems to speak to him, "Even *thou* wast as one of them." Or we look into society, and we find in some Christians so much worldly conformity, that to one after another Obadiah might come, and exclaim, "Even *thou* wast as one of them." Let me ask those Christians who spend several afternoons in the week in visiting, and yet scarcely ever drop a word for their Lord and Master—Do you think that Obadiah's expostulation is not for you: "Even *thou* wast as one of them"?

Let us learn, therefore, these three lessons. 1. *First*, to live watchfully. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Snares and dangers will beset us as long as we are in the world. What some may call only the shadows upon the mountains may prove conquering foes (Judg. ix. 36). We all need the restraining grace of Christ. "Hold thou me up in my goings, that my footsteps slip not." 2. *Secondly*, to be careful about companionship. Edom's unfraternal antagonism was fed by the company he kept, till he was even "as one of them." Those who "mingle with the heathen" will not be slow to "learn their works." "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly . . . but his delight is in the Law of the Lord." 3. *Lastly*, to walk holily before God. St. Peter's exhortation should be kept in mind, "Giving all diligence, add to your *faith* [faith is the root—add to the root] heroic, manly courage; and to courage *knowledge* [self-knowledge, Bible-knowledge, the knowledge of Christ;

for knowledge is power for working and for waiting, for doing and for suffering]; and to knowledge *temperance* [temperance, or self-control, is an urgently needed grace]; and to temperance *patience* [we are all called to endure; we must not expect that we can be Christians without any trouble; Christ's soldiers must learn to endure hardness]; and to patience *godliness* [piety, devotion]; and to godliness *brotherly kindness* [Edom knew nothing of brotherly kindness; this brotherly kindness is love to the brethren—love to the godly].” And one more grace is enjoined, “Add to brotherly kindness *charity* [love to everybody].” Thus, in walking holily before God, we shall, by the power of his Spirit, keep from the sin of Edom, “Even thou wast as one of them”—one of the Babylonians; and all will take knowledge of us that we are the God-Man's disciples. The ointment of the right hand bewrayeth itself. We are Christ's. His we are, and him we serve. He was as one of us (sin only excepted), that we might be one with him for ever.—A. C. T.

Ver. 15.—*Recompense is sure.* “As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee.” Herein we have an immensely important principle laid down. Sowing and reaping always correspond. “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” All actions are seeds, many of which bear fruit in this world, and many in the next. “As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee.” Edom had been merciless and cruel, and the prophet says, “Thy reward shall return upon thine own head.” In like manner we find mystic Babylon denounced in Rev. xviii. 6 (I give the new version as more exact and expressive): “Render unto her even as she rendered, and double unto her the double according to her works: in the cup which she mingled, mingle unto her double.” Here you see the principle in force—rendering to Babylon as she rendered; doubling to her as she doubled; mingling for her as she mingled. We cannot overestimate the immense importance of this principle. In this life nations and individuals are constantly exemplifying the solemn truth which it involves. We should therefore all carefully remember that we are seed-sowing, and sooner or later must come the harvest. God told Edom, “Thy reward shall be upon thine own head. For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually.” So Edom drank the cup at the hands of Babylon; Babylon drank it at the hands of the Medes; the Medes and Persians drank it at the hands of the Macedonians; the Macedonians drank it at the hands of the Romans; the Romans, in their turn, drank it at the hands of the barbarians (Dr. Pusey). Thus as they had done, it was done to them. Their reward returned upon their own head. In Ezek. xxxv. 15 we have a similar denunciation of Edom: “As thou didst rejoice at the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so will I do unto thee: and thou shalt be desolate, O Mount Seir, and all Idumea, even all of it.” It is, you will notice, exactly the same kind of denunciation. In Prov. xxvi. 27 God says, “Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him.” And in Ps. ix. 15 we are told, “The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken.” In Numbers we find Moab plotting to curse Israel, and the curse came upon himself. In Judges we read of Adoni-bezek taken in battle, and maimed in his hands and feet. Adoni-bezek acknowledged that he had himself maimed three score and ten petty princes. His words are not dissimilar to our text, “As I have done, so God hath requited me.” He confessed that the law of Nemesis had reached him. The end of Haman will occur to us. Haman dug a pit, and fell therein himself. He set a stone rolling, and it returned upon him. He perished upon the gallows which he prepared for Mordecai. In Ps. xviii. David says, “With the froward thou wilt show thyself froward.” He clearly means that Jehovah will be sternly opposed to the sinner's frowardness. A similar passage is in Lev. xxvi., “If ye walk contrary unto me, then will I walk contrary unto you.” The stubborn will gain nothing by their obstinacy. God will render to nations and individuals according to their ways. They shall be filled with the fruit of their own doings. The enemies of Daniel were devoured by the lions which they intended for his destruction. The accusers of the three Hebrews were consumed by the fiery furnace which they kindled for them. The plotters of mischief were taken in their own wickedness and filled with their own ways. “As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee.” In the case of Jezebel we have a terrible example of this kind. In the place where Jezebel caused the dogs to lick the blood of

Naboth, the dogs licked her blood. Well said Eliphaz, "I have seen that they who plough iniquity, and sow wickedness, *reap the same*." The Jews, who were made to serve "strange" masters, were told that it was for serving "strange" gods. And our Lord himself has said, "With the same measure that ye mete it shall be measured to you again." Society has been likened to the echoing hills. It gives the speaker his words back again, doleful groan for groan, and joyous song for song. Thus "with the same measure that ye mete it shall be measured to you again." Jacob, who deceived his father, was in turn, and similarly, deceived by his sons. The Egyptians killed the Hebrew children; the God of the Hebrews slew the firstborn of Egypt. "As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee." The words, we know, were addressed to Esau, and we have had abundant proof of the truth of the principle which they involve. But let us briefly notice the converse. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." If the ungodly cannot sow hemlock, nightshade, and darnel, without reaping the same, so God's servants cannot sow seeds of kindness, seeds of truth, seeds of light, seeds of heavenly blessing, without reaping in due season. The great harvest of well-doing, like that of evil-doing, is indeed hereafter, but it has its tokens and firstfruits even now. Let us notice, for example, our adorable Redeemer's beatitude, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." We know that the merciful are those who upon gospel principles are sympathetic, helpful, loving, and kind. We know also that hereafter Christ will say to those on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed, . . . inherit the kingdom. . . . I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. . . . Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me." Hereafter, it is clear, the merciful will obtain mercy. But at present the like principle is at work. "As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee." The kind and merciful *now* enjoy much blessedness; the unmerciful are *now* unblest. A man whose sympathies are all dried up lives in a region of wintry blight. He walks in no glorious sunshine and in no joyous liberty. He knows nothing of the bliss that comes from open-hearted sympathy. There is darkness within. Darkness covers the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God does *not* move on the face of the waters. But the merciful man, the man who is kind and sympathizing, the man who is forgiving and forbearing, the man who has a kind excuse for others, the man who looks on the charitable side of a case, the man who thinketh no evil,—that man will reap here as well as hereafter. In his straits and afflictions he will find, as a general rule, the stream of kindness flow back again. The world will learn mercy by his mercy, and show some feeling for one whose wont was to sympathize with adversity. "The merciful man doeth good to his own soul" (Prov. xi. 17). The widow of Sarepta and the woman of Shunem, for kindness to the Lord's prophets, received a prophet's reward. The alms of Cornelius brought good to his own soul. God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love. "As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee." Now this is one of the original principles of the creation of God. God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit, *after his kind*." The vine yielded grapes; the fig tree, figs; the olive tree, olives. The principle was universal. So it is in the moral world. "What a man soweth, that shall he also reap." There is no altering the law naturally, morally, or spiritually. If a mother spoils a child, we know what the harvest will be. If a man takes to intemperate habits, we know what the harvest will be. And we all expect an idle, indolent man to come to disgrace and shame. Let no one be deceived. "God is not mocked . . . whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Often and often souls have been deceived. Eve was deceived, Jacob was deceived, Ahab was deceived, David was deceived; but as they sowed, they reaped. God was not mocked. And so with us. Our words, our actions, our habits, are seeds—seeds that will spring up. *Oh, what will the harvest be?* In this life there is, as I have shown, no little reaping ever going on. Nations and individuals are constantly learning the meaning of God's words to Edom, "As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee." But the great harvest is at the end of the world. The Lord of the harvest is at hand. My text, which I have said, has a present fulfilment, especially amongst nations, will have its complete accomplishment with regard to individuals when Christ's judgment-throne is set up. Then shall every man receive the things done in the body.

Every one shall receive—that is, carry away with him—the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. The bad—the sins—must each be as a scorpion-sting throughout eternity. Every sinner will be his own hell. The memory of his sins will be perpetual torment. In days when men argue against a future hell, it may be asked—Who will argue that justice must extinguish the memory and take away the remorse of the sinner's wilful transgressions? The recollection of the unpardoned sins of a lifetime will in itself be terrible. Let us, in this day of grace, when Jesus of Nazareth passeth by, offering salvation and everlasting life, let us every one come to him without delay. Let us accept his forgiving mercy, that our sins may be blotted out. Let us yield to the guidance of his Holy Spirit. And let us put on the Lord Jesus Christ, that we may be able to stand in the judgment. Henceforth may this be our language—

“Jesus, thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
‘Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head”!

A. C. T.

Ver. 17.—*Safety, sanctity, and sufficiency.* “But upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and it shall be holy; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.” What a burst of heavenly sunshine! What an effusion of joyous light! What music from the throne of God! What an evangel at the fourth watch of the night! What a smile of Divine love for the cast-down and sorely afflicted captive! Safety, sanctity, sufficiency. The inspired prophet here sets forth some of the richest treasures of the grace of God. They tell of deliverance from Babylon and restoration by Cyrus; they expand to the later deliverance from the Idumeans by the Maccabees; and, what especially applies to us, they stretch to the glorious salvation wrought for captive sinners by the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Safety, sanctity, and sufficiency,—these are fully set before us in the gospel. They are the heritage of those who have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God. Let us prayerfully study them.

I. SAFETY. “Upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance.” 1. *This is deliverance from the Law.* “There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.” “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death.” The ten thousand condemning voices of the Law are silenced by the Deliverer. Christ has met the Law's requirements. His people are free. They are free indeed. The old handwriting against them was cancelled by the cross. The debt is paid. We are not under Law, but under grace. 2. *This is deliverance from sin.* “He shall be called Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.” Yes, from the penalty, from the power, and from the presence of their sins. What a glorious deliverance! 3. *This is deliverance from Satan.* “The Seed of the woman has bruised the serpent's head.” Christ has vanquished our deadly foe. Now, if we resist the devil, he will flee from us.

“Captivity is captive led,
Since Jesus liveth who was dead.”

4. *This is deliverance from the world.* He who said, “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world,” prayed that his people might be kept from the evil in the world. Through him we are more than conquerors. “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” 5. *This is deliverance from death.* “O death, where is thy sting?” He that trusteth in Christ shall never die. That which we call death is to the servant of God the gate of life. The Christian is promised that he shall not taste of death. The death he undergoes is only the death of pain, of sickness, of sorrow, of sin, of death. To depart is to be with Christ, which is far better than remaining here—far better.

“For ever with the Lord:
Amen, so let it be.
Life from the dead is in that word,
‘Tis immortality.”

“Upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance.”

II. In the next place, WE FIND SANCTITY PROMISED. "It shall be holy." In its present-day application this promise sets forth the sanctification of God's Israel. It is not sufficient to realize deliverance; we are to seek holiness. Joshua's captains were not only to put their feet upon the necks of the five kings of the enemy, but they were to go forward and possess the whole of Canaan. Deliverance from foes in the cave of the heart is only preparatory to further conquests and higher attainments. We are delivered from our enemies that we may serve God without fear, "in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life." "It shall be holy." The Christian's sanctification is twofold. 1. He is sanctified as *set apart for God*. Like the vessels of the sanctuary, he is consecrated to holy uses. It was Belshazzar's great sin that he took the vessels of the temple and put them to a profane use. God's people are to be vessels unto honour, meet for the Master's service, resting on the heavenly Eliakim. Not their own; a separate people; sanctified or set apart by God the Father. 2. The other view of the Christian's sanctification is the *blessed hallowing of the Holy Spirit*. This is a progressive work. We are to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour. We are to add to our faith. We are to be going from strength to strength. We are to press towards the mark. We are to be changed from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord. "Upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and it shall be holy." May we now seek to be filled with the Spirit of holiness!

III. The third great promise of my text is SUFFICIENCY. "The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions." Here is all-sufficiency in all things. It is as the heir entering upon his inheritance. "My beloved is mine, and I am his;" "All things are ours, the world, life, death, things present, things to come,—all are ours." In possessing our possessions we enter upon the unsearchable riches of Christ. His salvation ours; his pardon ours; his joy ours; his rest ours; his kingdom ours; his angels ours; his home ours; his glory ours. Christ himself ours; Christ in us the Hope of glory; Christ for us the Pledge of glory; crucified together with him; raised together with him; seated together with him; glorified together. Oh, the unsearchable riches of the Christian! May we learn to possess our possessions, to use our talents, to enjoy our privileges, to rise to our dignity, to realize our standing, to pass through the length and breadth of our Canaan! Ours a righteousness which is Divine; a peace which surpasseth understanding; a joy which is unspeakable; a love which passeth knowledge; a kingdom which cannot be moved; a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Oh, let us go up and possess! Safety, sanctity, sufficiency. Eternal safety, Divine sanctity, all-sufficiency in all things. "Upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and it shall be holy; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions."—A. C. T.

Ver. 18.—*Truth triumphant*. "And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the Lord hath spoken it."

I. WHAT IS HERE PROMISED CONCERNING GOD'S HERITAGE APPLIES TO THE WHOLE CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN. Truth may appear to lose many a battle, but in the end it will assuredly prevail. Edom, long hostile to God's ancient Israel, is likened to stubble before the flames. Happy the people who are on the conqueror's side. When Israel was in Egypt, captive and down-trodden, it seemed impossible that they could ever march forth to liberty and Canaan. But the time came when they sang of victory, and Pharaoh and his captains were as stubble before the flame. When Asa found the vast hosts of the Ethiopians coming against him, it might have appeared impossible to subdue them. But Asa knew the secret of power. The Ethiopians were soon as stubble before the flame. When the Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites were confederate against Jehoshaphat, it seemed as if the might and greatness were on the side of the enemy, but good King Jehoshaphat gave himself to prayer and praise—believing prayer, and joyous and confiding praise. The enemies were soon as the stubble before the flame. And so in the end truth itself shall prevail. Foes may be mighty and gospel doctrines may seem to make slow progress, but the time must come when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." That was a wondrous vision once seen by St. John: war in heaven—Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and his angels, and the dragon was cast out, and his angels with him. "So let

all thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love thee be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." The Church of God has often been likened to a worm, yet it is to thresh the mountain, and is seen in sacred song as "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Thus weakness is girt about with strength, because God himself fights his people's battles, and is one with them. "He that seeketh thy life seeketh my life;" "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of mine eye." All-conquering oneness. This secret of conquest may be seen by comparing our text with Isa. x. 17. In our text the word is, "The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble;" but the word in Isaiah is, "The light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briars in one day." Thus the Lord espouses the cause of his people; so that in all things they are more than conquerors through him who loved them.

II. WHAT IS THREATENED IN OUR TEXT RESPECTING ESAU APPLIES TO ALL THE ENEMIES OF GOD. As it is said that the house of Esau shall be as stubble consumed by the flame, so in New Testament language the ungodly are likened to chaff which shall be burned with unquenchable fire. It is a dreadful thing to be found amongst the enemies of God. St. Paul, we read, wept because there were men who were enemies of the cross of Christ. A man who is hostile to the atonement of the Saviour shows he refuses to be reconciled to God. The message of reconciliation has come to us. The way of peace is proclaimed to us. The gospel of God's grace is set before us. The path of life is revealed. Salvation is offered without money and without price. When we were enemies Christ died for us. Now, the promise is, "peace by the blood of the cross." And some spurn the cross. The apostle might well weep. Angels might well weep. The Saviour himself wept over such. There cannot be hope for a man who remains an enemy of the cross of Christ. The house of Esau shall be as stubble. The ungodly are as the chaff. There cometh One "whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into his garner, but *burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.*" And not only is this part of our text applicable to all the enemies of God; it reminds us of the overthrow of all that is evil. Every plant that the Father hath not planted shall be rooted up. Truth shall prevail over error. Light shall conquer darkness. Eternal day shall chase away the shades of night. Goodness shall prove stronger than sin. The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. All things shall be subdued unto Christ. "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Ere a little, and the song shall be heard, "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Voices as of many waters, voices as of mighty thunders, voices loud and strong, voices of angels, voices of the redeemed of men, joyous coronation-voices, shall soon unite in proclaiming the once despised Man of sorrows "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. And he shall reign for ever." "For the Lord hath spoken it."—A. C. T.

Vers. 19, 20.—"Rehoboth." "And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain the Philistines: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin shall possess Gilead. And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites [or rather, 'the captivity,' etc., 'which are among the Canaanites' (Pusey, following the Chaldee, etc.)], even unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south." Here we have wideness at last; *Rehoboth* after narrowness, strife, contention, and hatred (Gen. xxvi.). The house of Jacob is shown us stretching forth in all directions—north, south, east, and west; the promises long looked for fulfilled; Jacob, long pent in, now enjoying a large room. The cries in narrowness have been answered in wideness. *Rehoboth* is inscribed on Judah's banner, and little Benjamin shares the plenteousness. They of the south have no Edomite enemy; nay, the mount of Esau is their possession. They of the plain have no Philistine foe; their own borders reach to the coast. Over Philistia they triumph. The giants of Gath lie in the dust. The men of Ashdod and Ekron, who sang the praise of Dagon, are no more. Ashkelon and Gaza are silent in death. They of the plain possess the whole territory of the Philistines, with the sea for their only border. But much more than this. They extend northward. They take in Ephraim.

No more shall Ephraim vex Judah. They also take in Samaria. No more shall it be heard that the Samaritans have no part with the Jews. And more still. Benjamin shall possess Gilead, thus stretching to the east. It shall have a portion on both sides of Jordan. And, further, Judah shall receive into fellowship those who were carried away captive from them. Some in Zarephath in Zidon, labouring as slaves in the smelting-house, and the captivity of Jerusalem shall possess the cities of the south. Thus the inspired prophet, from the sacred mount of vision, amongst other blessings, notices these five: (1) liberty after captivity; (2) peace after war; (3) wideness after straits; (4) a portion on both sides of Jordan; (5) unity after divisions and discord. With what joy must Obadiah have seen all these rich blessings unfolded before him! *Liberty!* Oh what a history of captivity and bondage was that of the Jews! *Peace!* Their national life hitherto had been one of war. *Wideness!* Up to this they had been sorely straitened and hemmed in in veriest narrowness. *A portion on both sides of Jordan!* Hitherto they had had their lot on the western side only. *Unity!* They had been torn by divisions. They had been weakened, impoverished, and desolated by divisions. How pleasant, therefore, the prospect of Judah receiving into its bosom multitudes of the captivity of Israel! All one at last. One fold under one Shepherd. A delightful prospect. Obadiah, like another Moses, must have viewed the scene with patriotic joy and hallowed fervour and gratitude. And now for the spiritual application of the passage to ourselves.

I. GLORIOUS LIBERTY IS PROCLAIMED TO US. Christ sets his people free. He came to lead captivity captive. He opens the prison to those who were bound. His Word is the perfect law of liberty. The Apostle Peter's deliverance from prison is like a picture of the deliverance wrought for the soul of man. We were in the dark dungeon, fast bound in misery and iron. Light shone in the prison. A friendly hand smote us. A voice bade us arise. The fetters fell off. We were led forth from the darkness of death into the light and liberty of the children of God. Or we may say, in the language of David (Ps. cxxvi. 7), "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped." Joyous liberty, blessed liberty, glorious liberty of the children of God.

II. PEACE IS OURS. The peace of the very God of peace. Secure tranquillity through the blood of the everlasting covenant. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned;" "Peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near." Peace always and by all means.

III. WIDENESS IS OURS. "Thou hast known my soul in adversities; . . . thou hast set me in a large room." The Lord brings his people into a wealthy place. "Rehoboth" is written on the gospel. "Rehoboth" is written on the work of Christ. "Rehoboth" is written on the wells of salvation. On the joys, the glories, the promises of covenant grace, the letters are written as with Calvary's blood—"Rehoboth." Room enough and to spare (Job xxxvi. 16).

IV. A PORTION ON BOTH SIDES OF JORDAN IS OURS. The Christian has the promise of the life that now is as well as that which is to come. All things are ours. The world, life, death, things present, things to come, the blessings of the throne and the blessings of the footstool, the upper springs and the nether springs,—all are ours. Oh, let us pity the men who have their portion only in this life! Let us pray for those whose hearts and treasures are where the rust and moth are. Let us seek to influence for good all those who have no portion on both sides of Jordan.

V. Finally, THE CHURCH IS CALLED TO UNITY. We are to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit. There are many stones, but one temple. There are many children, but one household—one family. There are many branches, but one Vine. There are many members, but one body. The Communion feast teaches this oneness. Our Lord's great intercessorial prayer was that his people all might be one. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love and concord, calls us to oneness. The divisions of Christians must grieve the Spirit.

"Our little systems have their day;
They have their day, and cease to be;
They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they."

Oh for another Pentecost, that the Church of to-day might be as the Church of the first days, and the Redeemer's words be exemplified, "That they all might be one, *that the world may believe that thou hast sent me*"!—A. C. T.

Ver. 21.—*Saviours and judges.* "And saviours shall come up on Mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau." "Saviours and judges;" "Mount Zion and the mount of Esau:" what contrasts! And note the saviours are made the judges. The saviours on Mount Zion are made the judges of the mount of Esau. If we follow up these lines they bring us to the true centre of full salvation and perfect judgment. Almighty and most merciful *Saviour*, thou most worthy *Judge* eternal, give us now of thy Holy Spirit that we may profitably study thy Word.

I. "SAVIOURS SHALL COME UP ON MOUNT ZION TO JUDGE THE MOUNT OF ESAU." Temporal deliverance had often been wrought for Israel, and still greater things would God accomplish. In Judg. ii. 16 we have an early use of two words of our text. "Nevertheless the Lord raised up judges, which saved them out of the hands of those that spoiled them." In Judg. iii. 9 we read, "When the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer [saviour] to the children of Israel, even Othniel." Again, in ver. 15, "When the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera." In Neh. ix. 27 we read, "In the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies." Here, then, we see that in temporal deliverances the twofold office was entrusted to one individual. The judges were often called saviours, and the saviours were often called judges. Thus we see the primary meaning of Obadiah's prophecy, "*Saviours* shall come up on Mount Zion to *judge* the mount of Esau." In the deliverance wrought by such as Judas Maccabæus and others we see the primary fulfilment of the words.

II. In another view of the text we may remark that AS TOPICALLY MOUNT ZION STOOD OVER AGAINST THE MOUNT OF ESAU, SO SPIRITUALLY GOD'S HOLY HILL STANDS OPPOSED TO THE MOUNTAINS OF THIS WORLD—the mountains of human pride, the mountains of human misery, the mountains of error, the mountains of unbelief, *all* the dark mountains of sin. And every such mountain shall be judged and brought low, even to the dust. A time is coming when the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established upon the tops of the mountains. At present great mountains of evil may seem to overshadow Zion, but ere long they shall become a plain. Our God can make even the worm to thresh the mountain—the least of his servants to "leap from Bashan," to "overcome troops," and "out of weakness" to become strong. "Saviours shall come up on Mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau."

III. Another reflection is this: THE CHILDREN OF ZION ARE TO BE SAVIOURS NOW; THEY SHALL BE JUDGES HEREAFTER. 1. *Saviours.* We are called to rescue the perishing. "He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death" (Jas. v. 20). But, as saviours, we must see well to our own souls. St. Paul's words to Timothy are very weighty: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine: continue in them, for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." In seeking to win souls we must take care that our own souls are won. In caring for others' vineyards, we must not neglect our own. This said, we return to the doctrine that *the saved are to be saviours*. We once had our part with the destroyer; now we are to be a blessing. We are to seek to save the lost. Moses calls to Hobab; Andrew finds Peter; Philip, Nathanael; the woman of Sychar brings her neighbours to Christ. Thus the saved are saviours. Noah calls others into the ark. Abraham invites Lot to Canaan. Rahab brings her relations under the shelter of the scarlet line. Joshua commands his household. Job sacrifices and prays for his friends. Isaiah lifts up his voice for the remnant. Jeremiah weeps and prays. Daniel fasts and makes supplication. The mothers of Salem bring their children to Christ, that he should bless them. Saviours ascend on Mount Zion. May we all know what it is thus to rise—thus to ascend, and walk on God's high places! 2. The children of Zion shall hereafter be *judges*. They shall "judge the world." They shall "judge angels." They shall sit with Christ on his throne. They shall not only be manifested at the judgment-seat of Christ, but shall share in the decisions of the Lamb. For the present they "judge not,"

unless it be *themselves*, or in the sense of testimony as regards the evil that is in the world. Through the cross of Christ the world has been crucified to them, and they are crucified to the world. "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil." The Christian has now to bear witness to this judgment, but the full and great assize is future.

IV. We may now turn our thoughts to THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. He is the almighty and most merciful Saviour; he is the most worthy Judge eternal. 1. Let us think of him as a *Saviour*. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." He comes to the sinner's heart. He knocks by his Word, by his providence, by his Spirit. He has knocked long. The heart, like the inn at Bethlehem, has no room for Christ, or the bolts of ignorance and unbelief bar him out. How long shall he be kept away? He may have given his last knock. You and I need a Saviour. Shall we not welcome him? Shall we not accept his offer? Oh, "how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" 2. Let us think of him as a *Judge*. "Behold, the Judge standeth at the door." If we open not to the Saviour, we must open to the Judge. I have read of a man of immense wealth who built for himself a magnificent mansion, and then shut himself up in it. His sovereign, passing that way, asked for admission. He refused it. Time went on. A change took place. There had come a great depreciation of West Indian property. The proud man, who would not receive his king, saw his gates yield to the law-officers of the crown. "Behold, the Judge standeth at the door." If we welcome not the knocking Saviour, how can we meet the Judge? May the Holy Spirit be our Helper, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, and not be ashamed at Christ's appearing! May we say with Luther—

"Beneath the cross I view the day
When heaven and earth shall pass away,
And so prepare to meet him!"

A. C. T.

Ver. 21.—*The kingdom*. "The kingdom shall be the Lord's." What fulness of brightest morning glory after a long night of blackest darkness! The kingdom longed for, the kingdom prayed for, the kingdom promised, the kingdom prophesied of, shall be the kingdom *come*. *The kingdom*. Not many kingdoms, but one. Now there are many, and these diverse from each other, and often at war one with another. The Prophet Daniel spoke of this when he said, "The Lord God shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed." The fulfilment is presented to us in Rev. xi. 15, "The seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever." "The kingdom shall be the Lord's." Now the world lieth in the wicked one. The kingdom is Satan's. Look at its sins, its miseries, its darkness, its degradation, its ruin. The kingdom is Satan's. See the heathen world bowing to wood and stone, or worshipping devils. Look at the vast millions carried away by the Mohammedan delusion. Turn to the multitudes hardened by Jewish infidelity. View so-called Christendom, with teeming myriads rejecting the truth. See also the millions that have not so much as the profession of any religion. Is not Satan the prince of this world? Is not the great enemy of souls usurping the seat of power? Oh, then, as we think of Israel not gathered home; as we think of Babylon drunk with the blood of saints; as we think of the infidelity and ignorance which stalk abroad in the professing Church and in the world; as we think of war and bloodshed deluging the earth; as we think of nations discomfited by the frailties of human governments; as we think of the Church torn by contentions; as we think of Rachels weeping for their lost ones; as we think of the tears which bedew the cheeks of orphans and widows; as we think of the sorrows in our hospitals; as we think of the bitter poverty in our large cities; as we think, too, of the groans of the poor brute creation; and as we think of the sad partings, the great disappointments, the strong animosities, and the cruel wrongs common to earth,—shall we not pray for the fulfilment of our text? shall we not cry, "Thy kingdom come"? shall we not exclaim, with St. John, "Come, Lord Jesus: come quickly"? It is a cry for the end of toil, the end of suffering, the end of tears, the end of temptations, the end of sin, the end of gloom, the end of darkness, the end of death. It is a loud

cry for the song of heaven to be heard, "Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of God, and the power of his Christ." It is an earnest longing to join in the Hallelujah chorus of the great multitude, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" "The kingdom shall be the Lord's." At present, although the kingdom of *nature* is his, creation groans, being burdened. At present the kingdom of *providence* is his, but man keeps blotting the pages of history, and things are not as they ought to be. At present the kingdom of *grace* is his, but his grace is often frustrated, and the subjects of his grace live far below their privileges and high calling. Ere long, and the three kingdoms shall be no more imperfect. They shall be consummated in the full Christocracy—"the kingdom shall be the Lord's." The kingdom of glory shall come, and shall have no end. In closing our study of the Book of Obadiah let us carry with us the sweet echoes of its last words. May the Holy Spirit, in all the vicissitudes of earth, keep us in mind that "the kingdom shall be the Lord's"! Ere long, and he shall come whose right it is to reign. In the interval before the advent let us be alive to our duty.

I. LET US BE READY FOR IT. No one who is impenitent and unbelieving can be ready. Like Ethelred, he is all unready. To be prepared for Christ's coming, we must be washed in his blood, justified by his righteousness, and sanctified by the Spirit of holiness.

II. LET US BE LOOKING FOR IT. Let us say with St. Paul, "We wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory." Let us mount our *heimwehstuch* in longing expectation and hope. Christ's disciples are to be not only servants, but *like* unto servants who wait for their lord. The servant who expects his lord, has him in mind, and is on the look-out, lest, coming suddenly, his lord finds him sleeping.

III. LET US BE WORKING FOR IT. The absent Saviour has given to every man his work. Each one has something to do. Every true disciple is a worker, called to prepare the way of the Lord—to make some crooked path straighter, some rough place smoother, some mountain lower, some valley higher. "The kingdom shall be the Lord's."

IV. LET US BE LIVING FOR IT. "What manner of persons ought ye to be?" How weaned! How unworldly! How heavenly-minded! How Christ-like! For "the kingdom shall be the Lord's."

V. LET US BE PRAYING FOR IT. "That it may please thee shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect, and hasten thy kingdom."

"Come, then, and added to thy many crowns
Receive yet one, the crown of all the earth,
Thou who alone art worthy."

VI. LET US BE GLAD. We ought to rejoice. We ought to lift up our heads. Advent bells are ringing. The sound of the bells on our High Priest's robe may be heard as he comes forth to bless. Hallelujah! "The kingdom shall be the Lord's."—A. C. T.

Ver. 1.—*God and bad men.* "The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord God concerning Edom; We have heard a rumour from the Lord, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle." Of the history of Obadiah we literally know nothing. His name, which signifies "Worshipper of Jehovah," and his short prophecy afford the only information concerning him. From vers. 11 to 14, which are thought to contain an allusion to the exultation of the Edomites over the final capture and plunder of Jerusalem, we might with some confidence infer that he flourished after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. In all probability he must have lived near the time of Jeremiah; and indeed there is almost a verbal agreement between his utterances in vers. 1—8 and those contained in Jer. xlix. If we take this view we might suppose that his prophecy was delivered between the year a.d. 588, when Jerusalem was taken by the Chaldeans, and the termination of the siege of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar. As to his prophecy, it is the *shortest* in the Bible: one chapter comprehends all. Its *subject* is the destruction of Edom on account of its cruelty to Judah, Edom's brother, and the restoration of the Jews. Its *style* is marked by animation,

regularity, and clearness. These words of the first verse suggest two thoughts concerning God and bad men.

I. THAT GOD MAKES A REVELATION CONCERNING BAD MEN. Here is a revelation concerning Edom, the enemy of God and his people. Isaac had two sons by Rebekah—Esau and Jacob. Esau was called Edom, “red,” in memory, it is said, of the red pottage for which he sold his birthright (Gen. xxv. 30). Observe: 1. The *forms* of the revelation. (1) As a *vision*. “The vision of Obadiah.” The prophet was a seer. The Eternal revealed himself to the eyes of his soul. He who would be a true minister of God must see the thing before he speaks it. “That which we have seen and handled,” says the apostle. Man has other eyes than those that are in his forehead. He has a faculty for seeing the invisible and the eternal; this distinguishes him from the brute. (2) As a *report*. “We have heard a rumour from the Lord.” The word “rumour” means “report.” “We have heard a report from Jehovah.” He heard as well as saw. The soul has ears to catch the echoes of eternal thought. God in times past spake to the fathers by the prophets; and now, as in olden times, speaks by symbols and sayings, by appealing to the eye and the ear. 2. The *character* of this revelation—a message. “An ambassador is sent among the heathen.” Did he mean by the ambassador, himself, or any other prophet or prophets, or some celestial minister? It does not matter. The message is the thing—a message from Jehovah to the nation. God sends his messages to the nations in many ways and by many agents. 3. The *subject* of the revelation. “Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle.” The object of the message was to stir up the Assyrians, and afterwards the Chaldeans, against Edom. But our proposition is that God makes a revelation concerning bad men; and the subject of that revelation embraces at least two things. (1) *That their sins will ruin them*. This the Almighty has revealed over and over again in the Bible, and in every chapter of human history and experience. The burden of all is, “The wages of sin is death.” (2) *That evangelical repentance will save them*. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isa. lv. 7). These two subjects are the great burden of God’s revelation to bad men.

II. THAT GOD PUNISHES BAD MEN BY BAD MEN. He now sent a messenger amongst the nations. What for? To stir up the Assyrians and Chaldeans—both bad people—to wreak vengeance on corrupt Edom. Why does he employ bad men for this awful work of retribution? He could do it without any secondary agency at all, or, if he chose to employ any instrumentality, could use the forces of nature and the monsters of the forest alone to do the work; why employ bad men to punish bad men, fiend to punish fiend? By doing so: 1. He reveals in the *most powerful way to the victim the enormity of his sin*. The torture which his fellow-man brings on him he is made to feel is but a slight stroke of that fiend of depravity which has set his own soul against his Maker. 2. He reveals his own *absolute power over the workings of the human heart*. Thus he maketh “the wrath of men to praise him,” etc. (Ps. lxxvi. 10). He makes even the devil himself to carry out his will. But though God employs bad men to punish bad men by rapine, plunder, and bloody wars, it is not by his instigation; they act by their own free will. He is not the Author of evil. All good proceedeth from him, and all evil is overruled by him for the order and blessedness of the universe. The devil is not less a devil because he inflicts the penalties of justice on men.—D. T.

Vers. 2-5.—*Pride*. “Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised. The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee,” etc. These words may be taken as suggesting and illustrating one of the chief sins of all sinners, viz. *pride*, that which poets tell us “peoples hell and holds its prisoners there.” The words suggest three facts in relation to pride.

I. THAT THE MOST DESPICABLE PEOPLE ARE OFTEN THE MOST DISPOSED TO PRIDE. Edom, which is charged with the sin of pride, is here described as “small among the heathen” and “greatly despised.” Not only were they a small people, small comparatively in numbers, wealth, and influence, but despised. They became contemptible in the estimation of their contemporaries. Small things and small men are not always despicable, for God made the small as well as the great. It is the moral character that creates and deserves contempt. Now, small and despicable as were these Edomites,

they were nevertheless *proud*. It is often, if not ever, so. The smaller the men the more disposed to pride. The man small in *body* is often swollen out with ideas of the comeliness of his person; the man small in *intellect* is the same. The men who rate themselves as great thinkers, scholars, authors, preachers, are invariably small-brained men. Men of great intellect and lofty genius are characteristically humble. An old writer has observed that "where the river is the deepest the water glides the smoothest. Empty casks sound most; whereas the well-fraught vessel silences its own sound. As the shadow of the sun is largest when his beams are lowest, so we are always least when we make ourselves the greatest."

II. THAT PRIDE EVERMORE DISPOSES TO SELF-DECEPTION AND PRESUMPTION. 1. To *self-deception*. "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee." Pride is a wonderful artist; it magnifies the small; it beautifies the ugly; it honours the ignoble; it makes the truly little, ugly, contemptible man appear large, handsome, dignified in his own eyes. It is said that Accius, the poet, who was a dwarf, would have himself painted as tall and commanding in stature. In truth, it makes the man who is a devil at heart appear to himself a saint. Witness the Pharisee in the temple. 2. To *presumption*. "Thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?" The Edomites are here taunted with the confidence that they placed in their lofty and precipitous mountain, and the insolence with which they scouted any attempt to subdue them. A proud man always presumes on strength, reputation, and resources which he has not. Whilst he stands on quicksand he fancies himself on a rock. "Thou sayest thou art rich, and increased with goods, and hast need of nothing; whereas," etc. (Rev. iii. 17). Ah! self-deception and presumption are the twin offspring of pride.

III. THAT THE MOST STRENUOUS EFFORTS TO AVOID PUNISHMENT DUE TO PRIDE WILL PROVE FUTILE. Two things are taught here concerning its punishment. 1. Its *certainty*. "Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord." Here these sinners are assured, by a bold hyperbole, that whatever attempts they made to avoid retribution, they would fail. If, like the eagle, they towered high into the air, far up among the clouds, nestled among the stars, and made the clouds their footstool, the fowler of retribution would bring them down. All attempts on behalf of the impenitent sinner to avoid punishment must fail when the day for justice to do its work has come. 2. Its *completeness*. "If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night (how art thou cut off!), would they not have stolen till they had enough? if the grape-gatherers came to thee, would they not leave some grapes?" The spoliation which thou shalt suffer shall not be such as that which thieves cause, bad as that is; for these, when they have seized enough, or all they can get in a hurry, leave the rest; nor such as grape-gatherers cause in a vineyard, for they, when they have gathered most of the grapes, leave gleanings behind; but it shall be utter, so as to leave thee nothing. The exclamation, "How art thou cut off!" bursting in amidst the words of the image, marks strongly excited feeling. The contrast between Edom, where no gleanings shall be left, and Israel, where at the worst a gleanings is left, is striking (Isa. xvii. 6; xxiv. 13). Retribution strips the sinner of everything; nothing is left but sheer existence, and that existence intolerable.

CONCLUSION. Beware of pride, then. The primal cause of all sin, all pain, and all woe to come, the great fountain-head of evil, is pride. It must lead to ruin. "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

"He that is proud eats up himself. Pride is
His own glass, his own trumpet, his own chronicle,
And whatever praises itself but in
The deed, devours the deed in the praise."
(Shakespeare.)

D. T.

Vers. 6—9.—*God in retribution*. "How are the things of Esau searched out! how are his hidden things sought up! All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border," etc. Man is essentially a dependent being. The ineradicable and ever-operative sense of his dependence urges him to lean his being on some object for

rest and safety. His sin is that he puts his confidence on objects unworthy and unsafe. "Some trust in chariots, some in horses," etc. The Edomites, it is suggested here, trusted to the insecure. Here we have God in retribution *destroying the grounds of the sinner's confidence*.

I. DID THEY TRUST TO THEIR MATERIAL DEFENCES: THESE WERE WORTHLESS. "How are the things of Esau searched out! how are his hidden things sought up!" The reference is to the hiding-places to which they resorted in cases of danger. The country of the Edomites was pre-eminently favourable for such concealment and shelter. The cities of Edom consisted of houses mostly cut in the rocks. "The great feature of the mountains of Edom is the mass of red bald-headed sandstone rocks, intersected, not by valleys, but by deep seams. In the heart of these rocks, itself invisible, lies Petra" (Stanley). "Petra is unique. The whole Edomite country, from Eleutheropolis to Petra and Selah, hath small habitations (*habitatiunculæ*) in caves. And on account of the oppressive heat of the sun, as being a southern province, hath underground cottages. Hence the aborigines whom Edom expelled were called Horites, *i.e.* dwellers in caves." Nations may trust to their material defences, their armies, navies, fortifications; but they are as stubble to the raging fire when justice begins its work. Individuals may trust to their wealth, to material science and medical skill, to preserve their bodily lives; but when justice sends forth its emissary, death, what are these defences? Nothing, less than nothing, vanity.

II. DID THEY TRUST TO THEIR PLEDGED CONFEDERATES: THESE WERE WORTHLESS. "All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; they that eat thy bread have laid a wound under thee: there is none understanding in him." Those confederates were probably Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Zidon, with whom the Edomites joined in resisting Nebuchadnezzar; but these failed them, probably turned against them; and even their friends who were at peace with them and ate their bread deceived them in their hour of trial. "To no quarter could the Idumeans look for aid. Their allies, their neighbours, their very dependants, so far from assisting them, would act treacherously towards them, and employ every means, both of an open and covert nature, to effect their ruin." How often it happens, that when men get into adverse circumstances, their old allies, professed friends, those who have often partaken of their hospitality, not only fail them, but turn against them! "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm" (Jer. xvii. 5). He that trusteth even to his firmest friends leaneth on a broken reed.

III. DID THEY TRUST TO THE WISDOM OF THEIR GREAT MEN: THIS WAS WORTHLESS. "Shall I not in that day, saith the Lord, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau?" "The Idumeans confided not only in the natural strength of their country, but in the superiority of their intellectual talent. That they excelled in the arts and sciences is abundantly proved by the numerous traces of them in the Book of Job, which was undoubtedly written in their country. They were indeed proverbial for their philosophy, for the cultivation of which their intercourse with Babylon and Egypt was exceedingly favourable, as were likewise their means of acquiring information from the numerous caravans whose route lay through their country, thus forming a chain of communication between Europe and India" (Henderson). Yet what is the wisdom of man to trust in? "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." The wisdom of the wise is but foolishness; it is a miserable thing to trust in. Trust not in human wisdom; not in the wisdom of statesmen, scientists, ecclesiastics, theologians.

IV. DID THEY TRUST TO THE POWER OF THEIR MIGHTY MEN: THIS WAS WORTHLESS. "And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter." Delitzsch renders this, "And thy heroes despair, O Teman." Teman was the proper name of the southern portion of Idumea, called so after Tema, a grandson of Esau. Men trust in their heroes. At the banquets of public societies, companies, corporations, how does this confidence come out in the inflated cant of the speakers on the occasion, in relation to the army or the navy! A false confidence this also! God, by a breath of pestilence, can wither all the armies of Europe in an instant.

CONCLUSION. There is nothing in which the sinner trusts, nothing in matter or

mind, in force or skill, that can stand for one instant before the retributive stroke of justice. Though some trust in chariots and some in horses, let us trust in the Name of the Lord. Men who trust in anything short of God are like the man who in a thunderstorm takes shelter under a tree, whose tall branches attract and receive the shock of the lightning which scorches him to ashes.—D. T.

Vers. 10—16.—*Social cruelty*: 1. *A sin against the Creator*. "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever," etc. Social cruelty is the grand subject of these verses, and the cruelty is that which one brother perpetrates on another—Esau on Jacob. "Wrong or violence is all the more reprehensible when it is committed against a brother. The fraternal relation in which Edom stood towards Judah is still more sharply defined by the name Jacob, since Esau and Jacob were twin brothers. The consciousness that the Israelites were their brethren ought to have impelled the Edomites to render helpful support to the oppressed Judæans. Instead of this, they not only revelled with scornful and malignant pleasure in the misfortune of the brother nation, but endeavoured to increase it still further by rendering active support to the enemy. This hostile behaviour of Edom arose from envy at the election of Israel, like the hatred of Esau toward Jacob (Gen. xxvii. 41), which was transmitted to his descendants and came out openly in the time of Moses in the unbrotherly refusal to allow the Israelites to pass in a peaceable manner through their land (Numb. xx.)" (Delitzsch). These verses present to us social cruelty in three different features—as a *sin against the Creator*; *perpetrated against a brother, specially offensive to God*; *as working in various forms from generation to generation*. We shall devote a brief homiletical sketch to each of these. This passage implies, first, that social cruelty is a sin against the Creator; and the truth of this will appear from four subjects of thought.

I. **THE CONSTITUTION OF THE HUMAN SOUL.** Social cruelty is opposed to the normal condition of the human spirit. He who will study his own spiritual constitution will not fail to observe three great facts in relation to this subject. 1. *The existence of social love*. Social sympathy is one of the primary elements of our nature: its instinct is to render service to others and to seek their good will and fellowship. The malign is not inherent in man. Cruelty in him is not innate, as in the tiger and the bear. We are made to love and to be loved. 2. *The instinctive condemnation of cruel acts*. Never in the history of a soul has it instinctively approved of acts of cruelty as perpetrated either by itself or others. Conscience thunders against all such deeds: on the benevolent, and on the benevolent only, it smiles. 3. *Innate craving for social approbation*. The soul not only deprecates the ill will and loathing of society, but yearns deeply and always for its approbation. But this can only be attained by benevolent deeds. Now, inasmuch as the constitution of the soul is an expression of the Divine will, and that constitution is against cruelty, cruelty is an outrage on the Divine order.

II. **THE COMMON RELATION OF ALL TO GOD.** He is the Father of all men. No one of the human race is nearer to him than another. Each is his offspring and bears his image. And between all there is, therefore, the relationship of brotherhood. It cannot be the will of the great Father that his children should act as wild beasts, inflicting cruelty on each other, and thus harass his benevolent ears with the groans and shrieks of his offspring. What human father does not deprecate one of his children inflicting an injury on another, and does not ardently desire that each should work for the other? Are we more loving than he who made us? Does the brooklet contain more than the ocean?

III. **THE COMMON INTEREST OF CHRIST IN THE RACE.** Christ took on him the nature of man. He was the Son of man, not the Son of Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, bond or free, but the Son of *man*. The nature of all men was in him. He wore the nature of every man, he propounded doctrines for every man, he enacted laws for every man, he tasted death for every man. He was not ashamed to call us brethren. He loved the world, and gave himself for it. How abhorrent, then, must it be to him and to his blessed Father for one man to inflict cruelty upon another!

IV. **THE UNIVERSAL TEACHING OF THE BIBLE.** The whole Decalogue, as reduced and enforced by Christ, consists in loving God with all our hearts, and our neighbour

as ourselves. And everywhere in the New Testament are we exhorted to "be kindly affectioned one to another," to "recompense to no man evil for evil."

CONCLUSION. How obvious it is, then, that social cruelty in all its forms is a sin against the Creator! The man who injures his fellow-creature is a rebel against the government of the universe.—D. T.

Vers. 10—14.—*An old sin.* "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them," etc. These words present to us an old sin in one or two aspects.

I. HERE IS AN OLD SIN WORKING IN THE HISTORY OF POSTERITY. "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob," etc. What was the sin? "And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him; and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob" (Gen. xxvii. 41). Envy was the sin; and this envy towards Jacob, or Israel, was transmitted from generation to generation. The spirit of envy that was kindled in the heart of Esau towards his brother Jacob glowed and flamed with more or less intensity for ages in the soul of Edom towards the descendants of Jacob. Edom continued to be the inveterate foe of Israel. Neither a man's sinful passion nor his deed stops with himself. Like a spring from the mountain, it runs down posterity, often gathering volume as it proceeds. No sinner liveth to himself. One man's sins may vibrate in the soul of another a thousand ages on. This is shown in almost every chapter of the history of nations. The fire of vengeance which the cruelty of one nation kindles in its victim will not expire at the conquest. It will burn on until it breaks out in fury, and wreaks vengeance upon its own conqueror. Hence he that taketh the sword always perishes by the sword. This fact should: 1. *Impress us with the awfulness of our existence.* It is true that in one sense we are little beings, occupying but a small space in the universe, and soon pass away and are forgotten; still there goes forth from us an influence that shall never end. We throw seed into the mind of the world that will germinate, grow, and multiply indefinitely, and yield harvests of misery or joy. 2. *Impress us with the duty of every lover of the universe to protest against sin in individuals.* A man may say, "What does it matter to you that I sin?" My reply is, "It does matter to me as a benevolent citizen of the universe. If your sin merely damned yourself, it is sad enough; but it does not end there; its pernicious influence on the universe is inconceivably great and calamitous."

II. HERE IS AN OLD SIN REPROBATED BY GOD IN THE HISTORY OF POSTERITY. God's eye traced it from Esau down. How does he treat it? He reprobates it. "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them. But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of brother," etc. Delitzsch renders the words, "Look not at the day of thy brother," and regards vers. 12—14 as a prohibition; others do not acknowledge the authority for that rendering. These Edomites, it would seem from the words, did stand on the other side without rendering help in the day when the stranger entered Jerusalem; they did "rejoice" over the children of Judah at that period; they did "speak proudly" in the day of distress; they did "enter into the gate" of God's people in the "day of calamity;" they did "lay hands on their substance" on that day; they did stand in the "cross-way" and "cut" those off "that did escape." The omniscient eye saw all this. The Jews appeal to him to recompense the cruelty of these Edomites. "Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof!" (Ps. cxxxvii. 7). For all this God says shame should come on them, and shame did come. They are blotted from the history of the living. God condemns sin wherever it is, however it comes, and whatever its pedigree. It may be asked—If it were the envy of Esau that thus came down from age to age in his posterity, and worked these deeds of crime, where is the justice of God in reprobating them? They only inherit the iniquities of their fathers. We answer: 1. Sin is essentially abhorrent to Jehovah. It is the "abominable thing" which he hates: 2. The very

essence of sin is its freeness. Sin is not a forced act; no deed performed by a man against his will has any moral character, or can in a moral sense be either good or bad. The posterity of Esau were not compelled to cherish and develop the envy of their great progenitor. Each one could have quenched it. Each, no doubt, felt it to be contrary to his moral nature, and that it ought to be expelled. The Almighty knew that each man was free; hence his reprobation of sin wherever found.—D. T.

Vers. 10, 11.—*Social cruelty: 2. Perpetrated against a brother, specially offensive to God.* "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever," etc. The cruelty here is not the cruelty merely of one man against another, but of one who is in close natural relationship to the other—children of the same parents. Strange as it may be, it is nevertheless a fact that a brother's enmity is often the most savage and unrelenting. How can this fact be accounted for? From the greater amount of his natural love. True, the greater amount of love a man has in him, the greater capacity he has for wrath. Wrath is but love in flames. The measure of a creature's love determines his power of anger. The little shallow lake cannot yield that amount of boiling steam which the ocean can produce. No love, no hatred; small love, small hatred; large love, large hatred. A brother is supposed naturally to have more love in him towards his brother than any other. Hence, when this love is kindled into wrath, it is often terribly furious. But the truth contained in the text is this, that a brother's cruelty is specially offensive to Jehovah. It is for "thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever." But why should it be specially offensive?

I. BECAUSE THE OBLIGATION TO LOVE IS STRONGER. It is the duty of all men to love one another, but more especially the duty of a brother to love his brother. Children of the same parents are specially bound by nature to be one in sympathy and in heart.

II. BECAUSE THE CHIEF HUMAN INSTITUTION IS OUTRAGED. What is the chief human institution? That of a family. Schools, governments, Churches, are not to be compared to the family institution. The government of the family is the model government; the school of the family is the model school; the Church of the family is the model Church. But when the members of this family become cruel to each other, this human institution is outraged.

III. BECAUSE THE TENDEREST HUMAN LOVES ARE WOUNDED. When brother inflicts injury on brother, parental hearts bleed, and sisters are struck with an agony of grief.

CONCLUSION. We wonder not, then, that cruelty towards brothers is more offensive to God than any other cruelty. Solomon has said that a "brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle" (Prov. xviii. 19). The closer the relationship, in case of dispute, the wider the breach and the more difficult the reconciliation. A really offended brother is often harder to win back to friendship than the taking of a strong city or the breaking of the bars of a castle. Take the case of Cain and Abel, Joseph and his brethren, Absalom and Amnon. In all these cases nothing less than death was plotted and sought. Why is this? Why is a brother's anger so implacable? 1. Great love has been wounded. The more love, the greater capability of indignation. How strong the love of a real brother! 2. Great services have been ill requited. What attentions a true brother shows! how numerous, delicate, and self-sacrificing! If the object of all has proved utterly unworthy of them, how intense his chagrin, how poignant his distress! 3. Great hopes are frustrated. The offended brother anticipated a brother's sympathy, counsel, friendship, through all the checkered scenes of life. These hopes are shattered, and the wreck is vexatious beyond measure. 4. Great reluctance on the offender's side to acknowledge the fault and seek reconciliation. Strange as it may seem, it is yet true—a man would sooner offer an apology to any one than to his relations, especially to brothers.—D. T.

Vers. 12—16.—*Social cruelty: 3. As working in various forms from generation to generation.* "But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger," etc. Here we have a sketch of the workings of this cruelty towards Judah when he was in great distress, suffering, and peril.

I. CRUELTY HAS VARIOUS FORMS OF WORKING. Look at the forms here. 1. The

lack of sympathy when Judah was in distress. "Thou shouldest not have looked," etc. Greatly did Judah need Edom's sympathy at this time. "Strangers carried away captive their forces;" Babylon entered their country and their city and carried them away as captives. Foreigners entered into his gates and cast lots upon Jerusalem. The city, after a long siege, was broken up; and the great officers of the King of Babylon came and sat at the gates and cast lots on the spoils of Jerusalem. It was indeed a "day of calamity," as it is three times expressed in these verses. Terrible and never to be forgotten was that day when Babylon came with all its forces into Judaea, entered the city, and bore away as captives the inhabitants. Now, in their distress, how did Edom their brother act? They stood and looked carelessly on. Want of sympathy with suffering is a sin in the sight of God. Heaven denounces men, not only for the evil they actually perpetrate, but for the neglect of the good they ought to accomplish. These Edomites were like the priest and the Levite. 2. *Positive rejoicing* when Judah was in distress. It is said, "they rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of destruction," they "spoke proudly in the day of distress." They seem to have gloated over their afflictions. 3. *Participation in the work of their enemies*. They laid their hands on their substance, they cut off those that did escape, they delivered up those that did remain in the day of their distress. Social cruelty ever has had, and still has, many forms of working. Cold indifference, malignant rejoicing, as well as positive inflictions. See the charge brought against the Edomites on this occasion (Ps. cxxxvii. 7; Ezek. xxv. 12).

II. OMNISCIENCE OBSERVES IT IN ALL ITS FORMS. God's eye was on the Edomites, noted not only their positive acts, but the workings of their inner souls. Sin in all its operations is evermore under the eye of Omniscience. He knows the way each spirit takes. He searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all their thoughts. The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth their doings; they "are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." This fact, for an incontrovertible fact it is, should be practically realized. And if practically realized it will have a fourfold effect on the soul. 1. It will stimulate to great spiritual activity. When the eye of an intelligence falls right on us, the glance stirs the soul. What soul could sleep if it felt the eye of God ever resting on it? 2. It will restrain from the commission of sin. Did we feel his eye ever on us, should we yield to temptation? "Thou God seest me" is a powerful preventive. 3. It will excite the desire for pardon. God has seen all the errors and sins of the past, and they are great in number and enormity. Since he sees them, they must be either punished or absolved. 4. It will brace the soul in the performance of duty. Moses "endured as seeing him who is invisible." He knows our trials and our difficulties. Therefore let us be magnanimous under trial and brave in danger. Of God all-seeing, "What can escape his eye, deceive his heart omniscient?"

III. A JUST AND TERRIBLE RETRIBUTION AWAITS IT IN ALL ITS FORMS. "The day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head," etc. Retribution is a settled law in the material universe. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." There is a rebound in every sin. No crime has ever been committed that does not come back with a terrible rebound on the soul of the author. "They shall drink, and they shall swallow down." To swallow up and to be swallowed up is the world's destiny.—D. T.

Ver. 15.—*Social retribution*. "For the day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head." We have above furnished outlines of three homilies on the first sixteen verses of this chapter. *Social cruelty* we considered as the grand subject of the whole. This was presented: 1. *As a sin against the Creator*. And this was proved by the constitution of the human soul; the common relation of the race to God; the common interest of Christ in the race; and the universal teaching of the Bible. 2. *As when perpetrated against a brother, specially offensive to God*. And three reasons were mentioned for this—the obligation to love a brother is stronger; the chief human institution is outraged; and the tenderest human loves are wounded. 3. *As working in various forms from generation to generation*. In this view it was shown that cruelty has various forms of

working; that Omniscience observes it in all its workings; and that a terrible retribution awaits it in all its forms. Now *social retribution* is the subject before us, and this subject we have touched on already. There are two great popular errors concerning the subject of retribution. 1. *That retribution is reserved entirely for the future state.* That the future state will be a state of retribution—a state in which every man shall be rewarded according to his works—must be admitted by every thoughtful student of the Bible. But retribution is not only future; it is here; retribution is an eternal principle of the Divine government; it follows sin at all times and for ever. The men and nations whose acts are registered in the Bible proclaim the grand truth, “Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the *earth*: much more the wicked and the sinner” (Prov. xi. 31). “Bishop Butler, in accordance with the same doctrine, lays it down as an axiom that this life is the allotted and appointed period of retributive justice. Having assumed this as an undoubted fact, he proceeds to infer therefrom the certainty of the future judgment. How many masters in Israel arrive at the same wholesome conclusion on quite opposite premisses—the entire absence of systematic retributive justice during this life! ‘We find,’ he says, ‘that the true notion of the Author of our nature is that of a Master or Governor, prior to the consideration of his moral attributes. The fact of our case, which we find by experience, is that he actually exercises dominion or government over us at present, by rewarding and punishing us for our actions in as strict and proper a sense of these words, and even in the same sense, as children, servants, subjects, are rewarded and punished by those who govern them.’” Did not retributive justice strike our first parents and Cain at once? Did it not strike the antediluvian world, Sodom and Gomorrah, etc.? Another popular error concerning retribution is: 2. *That it is a special infliction of God.* We do not say that God may not break through the established order of things to inflict punishment, nor that he has not done so; for the Bible furnishes us with instances to the contrary. All we say is—this is not the general rule. Divine punishments are natural events. Divine justice works as naturally as Divine goodness. Sin and punishment are indissolubly linked as cause and effect. The text suggests two thoughts in relation to *social retribution*.

I. THAT IT IS OFTEN TIMES A RETURN TO THE OFFENDER OF THE SAME KIND OF SUFFERING AS HE INFLICTED ON HIS VICTIM. “As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head.” The bitter cup thou hast given to thine enemy shall come round to thee, and of its dregs thou shalt drink. This principle is stated by Christ. “With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” The Bible is full of examples of this principle. Isaac told a lie, affirming that his wife was his sister; and he is told a lie by his son Jacob, who declared himself to be Esau. Jacob had deceived his aged parent in relation to Esau; his sons deceive him with regard to Joseph. He had embittered the declining years of his aged sire; his children embittered his. Again, Joseph was sold by his brethren as a bond-servant into Egypt; in Egypt his brethren are compelled to resign themselves as bond-servants to him. All history is full of examples, and everywhere in modern society illustrative cases may be selected. The deceiver himself is deceived, the fraudulent is himself cheated, the hater is himself hated, the cruel is often ruthlessly treated. Thus “as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee.”

“Hear the just law, the judgment of the skies;
He that hates truth shall be the dupe of lies.”

(Cowper.)

II. THAT IT OFTEN APPEARS TO COME AS A SPECIAL VISITATION OF ALMIGHTY GOD. “The day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen.” All days are his days. But it is not until the guilty conscience is smitten with a sense of sin that it sees him and feels that the day is full of God. Electricity pervades the universe, is ubiquitous; but men become conscious of it and talk of it only when it flashes in lightning and sounds in thunder. So with God’s justice. It is everywhere; but when the guilty conscience feels its punitive touch it calls it the day of judgment. The righteous are *now* going into life eternal, every righteous deed is a step onward; the wicked are *now* going into everlasting punishment, with every sin they tramp downward.

CONCLUSION. Learn that no soul can sin with impunity; that every sin carries with it punishment. “The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices make whips to scourge us.”

It may be, indeed, through the deadness of your conscience and the superabundant mercies of this life, that you feel not the retributive lash as you will feel it at some future time; but retribution is working here.

"We still have judgment here that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague the inventor. This even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poisoned chalice
To our own lips."

(Shakespeare.)

D. T.

Ver. 17.—*The true Church; or, the community of the good: 1. A beneficent power.* "But upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions." Obadiah here commences his predictions respecting the restoration of the Jews from Babylonish captivity, their reoccupation of Canaan, and the reign of the Messiah. While the surrounding nations were to disappear, the Jews should regain possession of the land of their fathers. Mount Zion may be taken here as the symbol of the true Church of God, that is, the community of godly men existing on this earth. In this sense it is referred to in Hebrews. Here the whole passage may be taken as representing this true Church, or godly community, in three aspects—as a beneficent power; a consuming power; and an aggressive power. The subject of the sketch is on the Church as the beneficent power, which we have in the seventeenth verse. Three thoughts are suggested by the words concerning the Church as a beneficent power.

I. IT IS CONNECTED WITH DELIVERANCE. "Upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance." Mount Zion was the asylum for those who had escaped. In Mount Zion shall be the escaped. From Babylonian captivity and suffering they returned to Mount Zion, or Jerusalem, and were safe. There they enjoyed their old protection. In the true Church there is spiritual safety; it is a refuge that is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. It is watched by the infinite love and guarded by the almighty power of Christ; its blessed Keeper never slumbers nor sleeps. Oh, ye imperilled spirits pursued by the powers of hell, led by the devil captives, and sold under sin, flee to this Mount Zion, this true Church of God, this community of godly men, which is at once the organ and the residence of Christ.

II. IT IS CONNECTED WITH PURITY. "There shall be holiness." Moral pollution, or sin, is the source of all the calamities that befall men. Mount Zion is a consecrated spot. If there is holiness anywhere it is in connection with that community of men called the Church, which embraces the principles, cherishes the spirit, follows the example of the Son of God. True, the members are not perfect yet; but they are in the process of cleansing, and are already holy as compared with the pollutions of the ungodly world.

III. IT IS CONNECTED WITH ENJOYMENT. "And the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions." "Though the houses of Jacob and Joseph are here spoken of separately, it was not the intention of the prophet to teach that the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel would be re-established. Yet the special mention of Joseph clearly shows that the ten tribes were to return at the same time, and jointly with Judah and Benjamin, to possess the land of Palestine and the neighbouring regions (see Isa. xi. 12—14; Hos. i. 11). The restored Hebrews would unitedly subdue the Idumeans; which they did in the time of John Hyrcanus, who compelled them to be circumcised, and so incorporated them with the Jews that they henceforward formed part of the nation." The word "possess" here means *enjoy*—enjoy their possessions. The community of the true Church alone enjoy their possessions. They are a happy people; all things are theirs; they are full of joy; they even glory in tribulation. "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound!" (Ps. lxxxix. 15).—D. T.

Ver. 18.—*The true Church; or, the community of the good: 2. A consuming power.* "And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the Lord hath spoken it." There is a fire in the true Church. Notice—

I. THE CHARACTERISTICS WHICH THIS FIRE DISPLAYS. What is the fire? The fire of *truth*, that burns up error; the fire of *right*, that burns up wickedness; the fire of *love*, that burns up selfishness. "I am come," said Christ, "to kindle a fire upon the earth." "Is not my Word like a fire?" 1. The fire in the Church is a *strong fire*. It has burnt an enormous amount of wickedness in every form, age, and land. It has burnt through the fiercest storms of centuries. 2. It is an *extending fire*. Its flames are ever advancing, they reach further to-day than ever. The most splendid systems of men, ethical, theological, and philosophic, however brilliant, have been but sparks compared to this; they have burnt on a little and gone out in darkness. 3. It is a *steady fire*. It does not flare and flash, but burns its way silently wherever it goes. 4. It is an *unquenchable fire*. Men have tried to put it out, oceans of infidelity and depravity have been poured upon it, but it burns on.

II. THE MATERIALS WHICH THIS FIRE CONSUMES. "Stubble." What is moral depravity in all its forms—theoretical and practical, religious, social, political? What is it, however old, however decorated with worldly power and grandeur? What is it? "*Stubble*." It is not a rock, that stands fixed amidst the surges of time; not a tree, that has roots that may grow for ever; it is mere stubble, dry, sapless, worthless "*stubble*," ready for the fire. Error to truth, wrong to right, malice to love, is but stubble to fire.

CONCLUSION. God speed this fire until the whole world of wickedness shall be destroyed, until its heavens be dissolved, its earth burnt up, and its elements melt with fervent heat, and there come out of it "a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness"—D. T.

Vers. 19, 20.—*The true Church; or, the community of the good*: 3. *An aggressive power*. "And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain the Philistines; and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin shall possess Gilead," etc. By the "south" or southern part of Palestine is here meant those who should occupy it; and by the "plain," those who should occupy the low country along the shore of the Mediterranean. "According to the relative positions of those who should take possession of the different parts of the Holy Land was to be the enlargement of their territory by the annexation of the adjoining regions which had formerly been occupied by allies or hostile powers. As there is no subject specified before the country of Edom and the country of Samaria, it seems to be intimated that the regions of Ephraim and Samaria were to be occupied by the Jews and the Israelites jointly, without any regard to tribal distinctions; and the reason why the tribe of Benjamin is mentioned is merely on account of the proximity of Gilead to the territory which it originally possessed" (Elzas). "The promise here," says an old expositor, "no doubt has a spiritual signification, and had its accomplishment in the setting up of the Christian Church, the gospel Israel, in the world; and shall have its accomplishment more and more in the enlargement of it, and the additions made to it, till the mystical body is completed. When ministers and Christians prevail with their neighbours to come to Christ, to yield themselves to the Lord, they possess them. The converts that Abraham had made are said to be the souls that he had gotten (Gen. xii. 5). The possession is gained, not *vi et armis*—by force and arms; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual; it is by the preaching of the gospel, and the power of Divine grace going along with it, that this possession is got and kept." That the true Church is an aggressive power will appear from considering the *gospel*, which is at once its inspiration, its life, and its instrument. Consider, therefore—

I. THE ELEMENTS OF WHICH THE GOSPEL IS COMPOSED. It is made up of two great elements, "grace and truth," that is, eternal reality and Divine benevolence. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." To show the aggressiveness of these two principles, two facts may be stated. 1. That the human soul is made to *feel their imperial force*. It is true that the soul in its unregenerate state is ruled by directly opposite elements—error and selfishness. But even error has power over it only so long as it regards it as reality, and selfishness influences it under the guise of love. It is the truth when made clear to it that comes with a conquering power; it is love or grace that transports its heart. The human soul is made for these two elements. 2. That the human soul is bound to *yearn after these elements as its highest good*. Its deep hunger is for truth and for reality, for benevolence, or love. It has no natural hunger for error, no natural

hunger for selfishness. 3. That the human soul is everywhere *restless without these elements*. It is only as the soul gets truth and grace into it that it becomes settled, calm, self-united. These are facts connected with the human soul, and these facts show the aggressiveness of the gospel.

II. THE PROSELYTIZING SPIRIT WHICH THE GOSPEL ENGENDERS. As soon as ever the gospel takes real possession of a soul, that soul becomes intensely solicitous to spread it abroad. It becomes what Jeremiah describes as a "fire in the bones." Peter said, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Paul said, "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge," etc. "Necessity is laid upon us." Every genuine recipient, then, of the gospel becomes a missionary, a propagandist, a moral knight, to battle against the mighty hosts of error and selfishness. Each member of the true Church, or godly community, becomes, by a moral necessity, a soldier of the cross.

III. THE TRIUMPHS WHICH THE GOSPEL HAS ALREADY ACHIEVED. Compare the influence of the gospel in the world now to what it was when Christ was on earth. It was then confined to one lonely soul, the soul of Jesus of Nazareth; it is now in the possession of millions. The springlet has become an Amazon; the grain has covered islands and continents; the little stone has grown into a mountain that bids fair to fill the earth.

CONCLUSION. Such thoughts as these tend, we think, to demonstrate the essential aggressiveness of the true Church. It will one day take possession of all heathendom, with its "mount of Esau," the "plains of the Philistines," the "fields of Ephraim," and the "fields of Samaria," and what Canaanites there are as far as Zarephath.—D. T.

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