

CHAPTER 57

INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH 57

This chapter contains complaints of the stupidity and idolatry of the people, described in the latter part of the preceding chapter; and some promises of grace to the people of God. The stupidity of the former is observed, (²⁵⁷⁰Isaiah 57:1) they not taking notice of the death of good men, nor of impending calamities they were taken from, whose happiness is described, (²⁵⁷²Isaiah 57:2), then these idolatrous people are summoned before the Lord, (²⁵⁷³Isaiah 57:3) and are charged with deriding the saints with idolatry and murder, (²⁵⁷⁴Isaiah 57:4-6) and their idolatry is represented under the notion of adultery, attended with very aggravating circumstances, (²⁵⁷⁵Isaiah 57:7-9) and yet these people still entertained presumptuous hopes of happiness, and boasted of, and trusted in, their righteousness and good works, which would be exposed, and be of no advantage to them, (²⁵⁷⁶Isaiah 57:10-12), next follow promises of grace to the saints, that such that trusted in Christ should inherit the holy mountain, (²⁵⁷³Isaiah 57:13) that the stumblingblock of his people should be removed, (²⁵⁷⁴Isaiah 57:14), that he should dwell with the humble and contrite, (²⁵⁷⁵Isaiah 57:15), and not be always wroth and contend with them, for a reason given, (²⁵⁷⁶Isaiah 57:16) and that though he had smote them, and hid his face from them because of their sins, yet would heal them, lead them, and comfort them, and speak peace unto them, (²⁵⁷⁷Isaiah 57:17-19) and the chapter is concluded with the character of the wicked, and an assurance that there is no peace for them, (²⁵⁷⁸Isaiah 57:20,21).

Ver. 1. *The righteous perisheth*, &c.] Not eternally; he may fear he shall, by reason of sin and temptation; he may say his strength and hope are perished; and his peace and comfort may perish for a time; but he cannot perish everlastingly, because he is one that believes in Christ, and is justified by his righteousness, from whence he is denominated righteous; and such shall never perish, but have everlasting life: but the meaning is, that he perisheth as to his outward man, or dies corporeally, which is called perishing, (²¹⁰⁷⁵Ecclesiastes 7:15) and so the Targum renders it,

“the righteous die.”

Or it may be rendered, “the righteous man is lost”^{f1116}; not to himself, his death is a gain to him; but to the church, and to the world, which yet is not considered:

and no man layeth it to heart; takes any notice of it, thinks at all about it, far from being concerned or grieved; instead of that, rather rejoice, and are pleased that they are rid of such persons; which will be the case when the witnesses are slain, (⁶¹¹⁰Revelation 11:10). The Targum is,

“and no man lays my fear to heart;”

or on his heart; whereas such providences should lead men to fear the Lord, and seek to him, and serve him, as it did David, (⁹¹⁰Psalms 12:1):

and merciful men are taken away; or “gathered”^{f1117}; out of the world, to their own people, to heaven; these are such who obtain mercy of the Lord, and show mercy to others, holy good men: the former character may respect the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, this his grace implanted in them, discovered by acts of mercy and goodness; for one and the same persons are intended:

none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come; that there are evil times coming, great calamities, and sore judgments upon men; and therefore these righteous ones are gathered out of the world, and are gathered home, and safely housed in heaven, that they may escape the evil coming upon a wicked generation; and who yet have no thought about it, nor are they led to observe it as they might, from the removal of good men out of the world; (see ⁴²²¹2 Kings 22:20). All this may be applied to the martyrs of Jesus in times of Popish persecution; or to the removal of good men by an ordinary death before those times came.

Ver. 2. *He shall enter into peace*, &c.] Or “shall go in peace”^{f1118}; the righteous man goes in peace now; he has peace from his justifying righteousness; he has peace through believing in Christ; he has peace in, though not from, his obedience and holiness of life; and he has peace in the midst of the many trials he is exercised with; and he goes out of the world in peace, with great serenity and tranquillity of mind, as Simeon desired he might, having views of an interest in Christ, and in the glories of another world; and as soon as he is departed from hence he enters into peace, into a state where there is everything that makes for peace; there is the God of peace; there is Christ, the Prince of peace; there is the Spirit, whose fruit is peace; and there are the angels of peace, and good men, the sons of peace:

and there is nothing there to disturb their peace, no sin within, nor Satan's temptations without, nor any wicked men to annoy and molest them; and there is everything that can come under the notion of peace and prosperity; for the happiness of this state is signified by riches, by glory and honour, by a kingdom, and by a paradise; and into this state the righteous may be said to enter immediately upon death, which is no other than stepping out of one world into another; and this they enter into as into a house, as it really is, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; and, entering into it, they take possession of it, and for ever enjoy it:

they shall rest in their beds, their souls in the bosom of Abraham, in the arms of Jesus; their bodies in the grave, which is a bed unto them, where they lie down and sleep, till they are awaked at the resurrection; and where they rest from all toil and labour, from all diseases and distempers, pains and tortures, and from all persecuting enemies; (see ^{<f1413>}Revelation 14:13):

each one walking in his uprightness; in the righteousness of Christ, and in the shining robes of immortality and glory, and in perfect purity and holiness: or, "before him"^{f1119}; before God, in the sight or presence of him, and by sight, and not by faith, as now. Though this is by some considered as the character of the righteous man in life, so Aben Ezra; and then the sense is, that he that walks in his uprightness, in the uprightness or righteousness of Christ, and by faith on him; that walks uprightly in his life and conversation before God, and "before himself"; following the rule before him, and walking according to the rule of the Gospel, and in the ordinances of it blameless, when he comes to die, he enters into peace and rest. And to this sense is the Targum, which paraphrases it,

"that are doers of his law;"

(see ^{<f1213>}Romans 2:13). In the Talmud^{f1120} it is interpreted of that peace and happiness righteous men enter into when they die.

Ver. 3. *But draw near hither*, &c.] The death of the righteous, and their happiness after it, being observed: the wicked, who thought themselves safe from danger, and the happier that they were rid of the righteous, those witnesses and prophets which had tormented them, and therefore rejoiced on that account, are here summoned to the divine tribunal, to hear their character, and receive their doom, as follows:

ye sons of the sorceress; the children of Jezebel, the witch, and the prophetess that taught the servants of the Lord to commit fornication, and

bewitched with her witchcrafts the sons of the apostate church of Rome; by whose sorceries all nations have been deceived, and of which she repents not, (^{<6120>}Revelation 2:20 9:21 18:23):

the seed of the adulterer and of the whore; of the great whore of Babylon, with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication; and whose subjects and children are the seed of this whore, and the sons of this idolatrous church: or, “that committeth whoredom”^{f1121}; which aggravates the character, that they were not only the children of adulterous persons, but committed whoredom themselves.

Ver. 4. *Against whom do ye sport yourselves?* &c.] Is it against the ministers of the Gospel, the prophets of the Lord, the true and faithful witnesses, over whose dead bodies you triumph? know that it is not so much against them, as against the Lord himself, whose ministers, prophets, and witnesses they are; (see ^{<5148>}1 Thessalonians 4:8): “against whom make ye a wide mouth, and draw out the tongue?” gestures used by way of scorn and derision; (see ^{<49217>}Psalms 22:7,13). So the Papists open their mouths, and draw out their tongues, in gibes and jeers, reproaches and calumnies, against the true Christians, calling and despising them as heretics and schismatics; which abuse and ill usage of them will be resented another day. The Targum is,

“before whom do ye open your mouth, and multiply to speak things?”

as antichrist is said to have a mouth open, speaking great things and blasphemy against God, his name, his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven, (^{<6135>}Revelation 13:5,6):

are ye not children of transgression; given up to all manner of sin and wickedness; or children of the wicked one, as the Targum, either of Satan, or of the man of sin; or, as the Septuagint and Arabic versions render it, “children of perdition”; of the same character, complexion, and religion, as the son of perdition is: “a seed of falsehood”; or a lie, given to lying; to believe a lie, and to speak lies in hypocrisy; professing a false religion; embracing false doctrines; a spurious breed, and not the sons of the true church of Christ.

Ver. 5. *Inflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree*, &c.] Or, “inflamed with or among oaks”^{f1122}; with images made of oaken wood, such as the Papists worship, (^{<6120>}Revelation 9:20) expressing a burning zeal

for their idols, and being as hot upon them, as impure persons burn in lust one towards another: or “with mighty ones”^{f1123}; the kings and potentates of the earth, with whom the whore of Rome commits her fornication, even in every flourishing kingdom and state in Europe, compared to a green tree; alluding to the custom of the Heathens, who used to set up their idols under green trees and groves, and there worship them, which were pleasing to the flesh; and I wish, says Musculus on the text, there were no instances of this kind in the Papacy.

Slaying the children in the valleys, under the cliffs of the rocks? this may refer to the cruelty of these idolatrous worshippers; for, as they burn with zeal to their idols, so with rage against those that oppose their idolatrous practices, not sparing men, women, and children; and such butcheries have been committed in many places, and especially in the “valleys” of Piedmont; nor could the cragged rocks secure them from their falling a sacrifice unto them. Or it may intend the ruining and destroying the souls of such, who, before they fell into their hands, were innocent as children, by their superstitious worship and idolatry, committed in low and dark places, under cragged rocks, and in caves and dens; such as the above mentioned commentator speaks of, a very dark one, under a prominent rock, in which the ignorant and unhappy people, some time ago, worshipped and invoked a certain blessed saint, he knew not who, which could scarce be looked into without horror; and such was the cave in which they worshipped the angel Michael.

Ver. 6. *Among the smooth stones of the stream is thy portion, &c.]* Or thy god; but the portion of Jacob is not like them, stocks and stones, (^{<24006>}Jeremiah 10:16 2:27). Whenever they could pick up smooth stones, and such as were fit for their purpose, whether in the stream of a brook, or in a valley, as the word also signifies, they polished and formed them into an image, and made gods of them; and these were their portion and inheritance, and which they left to their children. There is an elegant play on words^{f1124} in the Hebrew tongue, between the word for “smooth stones”, and that for a “portion”^{f1125}, which cannot be expressed in our language: or, “in the smooth or slippery places of the valley shall be thy portions”; (see ^{<49816>}Psalm 35:6 73:18).

They, they are thy lot; even those stones. Jarchi’s note is, to stone thee with, the punishment of idolaters with the Jews; suggesting that those idols would be their ruin; as they will be the ruin of the idolatrous members of

the church of Rome, who repent not of worshipping their idols of stone among others, (⁶⁶⁶Revelation 9:20,21):

even to them hast thou poured a drink offering, thou hast offered a meat offering; or a “bread offering”, as well as a libation of wine, respecting the sacrifice of the mass, which consists of bread and wine, which is offered up in honour of their idols, angels and saints; hence “Michael mass” and “Martin mass”, &c.

Should I receive comfort in these? be pleased with such idolatrous sacrifices? no. The Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and Arabic versions render it, “should I not be angry for these?” I will; I have just reason for it. Or it may be rendered, “shall I repent of these^{f1126}?” of the evil I have threatened to bring, and am about to bring upon these idolaters? I will not.

Ver. 7. *Upon a lofty and high mountain hast thou set thy bed, &c.]*

Temples and altars, which are usually built on high places, where they commit spiritual adultery; that is, idolatry, in imitation of the Heathens, who had their temples and altars on high places; and the idolatry of the church of Rome, in this context, is all along expressed in language agreeable to the Heathen idolatry, and in allusion to it. Some think this phrase denotes impudence in their idolatrous worship; for not content to worship under trees, in valleys, and under cliffs of rocks, and such dark places; now, as not blushing at, or being ashamed of their actions, erect their altars in the most public places. Perhaps some reference may be had to the city of Rome itself, built on seven mountains, the seat of antichrist, and where the principal bed for idolatry is set up. The Targum is,

“on a high and lofty mountain thou hast the place of the house of thy dwelling:”

which agrees very well with the great city, the seat of the beast.

Even thither wentest thou up to offer sacrifice; the sacrifice of the mass, to do which the idolaters go to their high places, their temples, and to their high altars, and especially in the great city.

Ver. 8. *Behind the doors also and the posts hast thou set up thy*

remembrance, &c.] The memorial of thine idols, as the Targum. As the Heathens had their “lares” and “penates”, their household gods, so the Papists have their tutelar images, which they place in their houses, and in

their bedchambers; their images of saints, their crucifixes and superstitious pictures, which they call “memories”, and “laymen’s books”:

for thou hast discovered thyself to another than me; or, “from me”^{f1127}; departing from me, and leaving my bed; rejecting Christ as King of saints, deserting his worship and ordinances; thou hast uncovered thyself to another, prostituted thyself to another, been guilty of spiritual adultery or idolatry; receiving and acknowledging another for head of the church, according to whose will all things in worship are directed:

and art gone up; to the bed set up in the high place; to idolatrous temples and altars, there to offer sacrifice:

thou hast enlarged thy bed; to take in many adulterers, and idolatrous worshippers; and so, as Musculus observes, many small chapels, at first erected for this and the other saint, through the vast concourse of people to them, and the gifts they have brought, have, in process of time, become large and magnificent temples:

and made a covenant with them; with idols, and idol worshippers; agreeing to receive the mark and name of the beast, and to worship his image, (⁶¹³⁵Revelation 13:15-17), or, “thou hast cut for thyself more than they”^{f1128}; more trees to make idols of, or to make more room for the placing of idols in groves than the Heathens: or, “thou hast hewed it for thyself”;

a bed larger^{f1129} *than theirs*; that is, thy bed thou hast made larger than theirs: or, “thou hast cut for thyself from them”^{f1130}; taken away from emperors and kings part of, their dominions, and joined them to thy patrimony, and appropriated them to thine own use:

thou lovedst their bed where thou sawest it; took delight and pleasure in places of idolatrous worship, and in their idolatry, wherever they were: or, “thou lovedst their bed, a hand thou hast seen”^{f1131}; stretched out to help thee, or give thee power, or to invite, encourage, and receive thee into the idolatrous bed; or rather any pillar, monument^{f1132}, or statue, erected for idolatry, which seen, they fell down to and worshipped.

Ver. 9. *And thou wentest to the king with ointment*, &c.] To the kings of the earth, the singular for the plural, with whom the whore of Rome has committed fornication or idolatry, in allusion to harlots, who, in order to render themselves the more agreeable to their lovers, anointed themselves

with ointment: this may respect the grace of the Spirit of God, which the church of Rome pretends to give by administration of the sacraments, which it is said confer grace “ex opere operato”; and the extreme unction given as a meetness for heaven, in the last moments of life:

and didst increase thy perfumes; after the manner of harlots, who, to ingratiate themselves with men, use much perfumes: this may signify the many ways the whore of Rome takes to make herself regarded by the kings and nations of the earth; pretending to antiquity, infallibility, power of working miracles, works of supererogation, primacy and superiority over all other churches; using great pomp and splendour in places of worship, and in all religious services:

and didst send thy messengers far off; not only into neighbouring kingdoms and states, into all the nations of Europe; but even into the most distant parts of the world, into both the Indies, in order to make proselytes, spread the religion of the see of Rome, and increase its power. The pope’s “nuncios” and “legates a latere”, may be here pointed at, as well as the Jesuits his emissaries, sent into all parts to promote his interest. Jarchi’s note is,

“to exact tribute of the kings of the nations;”

which has been the business of the pope’s legates:

and didst debase thyself even unto hell; or lay thyself low; prostitute thyself as harlots do to every lover; or didst feign thyself very lowly and humble, as the pope does when he calls himself “servus servorum”; or rather, “thou didst depress”, or “bring low, even unto hell”^{f1133}; that is, multitudes of men and women, who are brought down to hell by the false doctrine and worship of the church of Rome; and the followers of the man of sin say, that if he brings down thousands into hell, none ought to say, what dost thou? Cocceius thinks it may have respect to his pretended power over hell, to send as many there as do not please him; arrogating to himself the keys of heaven and hell; or over purgatory, a figment of his brain, where he pretends the souls of men are for a time, and from whence, for a sum of money, he delivers them. The Targum is,

“thou hast depressed the strength of the people; or, as some copies, the strong of the people unto hell.”

Ver. 10. *Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way, &c.*] Or, “in the multiplicity of thy ways”^{f1134}: which were so many, as were enough to make her weary; the steps which were taken to obtain so much power over kings and kingdoms, which was gradually got with great pains and artifice, and to amass such vast treasures, and to enlarge her interest, and spread her religion in the world; the multitude of stratagems devised, and vast number of men employed, and embassies made to carry her point everywhere. Jarchi’s note is,

“to fulfil thy desires, and to enlarge thy substance:”

yet saidst thou not, there is no hope; as men in a good cause are apt to do, upon every difficulty that arises; but here, in this case, though the cause was very bad, yet when schemes did not take, or not so soon as wished for and expected, new difficulties arose, and opposition made; yet no cost nor pains were spared to gain the point in view, and establish a kingdom and hierarchy; which at last succeeded: this expresses the resolution, constancy, and pertinency of the bishops of Rome in their ambitious views and claims of power, who would not give out, nor despair of arriving at what they aimed at; and which, through great fatigue and labour, they attained unto:

thou hast found the life of thine hand; that which was sought for and laboured after; sovereignty over all bishops and churches; power over kings and kingdoms; and an universal empire over consciences, as well as over churches and nations; and also immense treasure and riches to support the pope, cardinals, priests, &c.; and perhaps giving life to the image of the beast that it should speak, and cause those that would not worship it to be killed, may be included, (~~f635~~ Revelation 13:15). The Targum is,

“thou hast multiplied (or as other copies) thou hast found great riches.”

Jarchi’s note is,

“the necessity of thine hands, thou hast found prosperity in thy works:”

therefore thou wast not grieved; at the toil and labour used, pains taken, and weariness contracted; the issue was an over recompence for all the trouble and difficulty that attended it: or, “therefore thou wast not sick”^{f1135}; of the undertaking; did not despond in mind, or languish without hope of succeeding, finding ground was gained; and at last things went

according to wishes; and then it caused no grief to reflect upon the fatigue and trouble that had been endured; and also grieved not at the idolatry introduced, nor repented of it; (see ⁽⁶¹⁰⁾ Revelation 9:20,21), So the Targum interprets it of impenitence.

Ver. 11. *And of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied, &c.*] By assuming the name of Christian, when it did not belong to her; as it does not to the church of Rome which is antichristian: this lie is told, not out of any fear of God, or reverence of Christ; for she has no fear or reverence of either; but to serve a purpose, to blind the eyes of men under the Christian name, and, with a pretence to serve the cause of Christianity, to get all Christendom under her power:

and hast not remembered me; or, “for thou hast not remembered me, nor laid it to thy heart?” or, “put me upon thy heart”^{f1136}; had no regard to Christ, nor had true faith in him, nor love to him; but all the reverse; degraded him in his offices, corrupted his doctrines, ordinances, and worship. The Targum is,

“and hast not remembered my worship, nor put my fear upon thy heart:”

and have not held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not or, “therefore thou fearest me not”^{f1137}; because as yet the vials of God’s wrath are not poured out, or his judgment inflicted on antichrist; but, ever since he began to reign, he has enjoyed great prosperity; therefore he fears not God, nor regards man; but says, “I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow”, (⁽⁶⁸⁷⁾ Revelation 18:7).

Ver. 12. *I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works, &c.*] For, notwithstanding all the idolatry, superstition, irreligion, and cruelty of the church of Rome, she makes large pretences to righteousness, by which she expects to be justified, and to merit eternal life, and even pretends to works of supererogation; but God will in due time make it clearly appear, both by the ministry of his faithful servants, which he has done in part already; and by his judgments that he will execute, that she has no righteousness; that what she calls so is no righteousness, but wickedness; and that her works she calls good works are bad ones, superstitious, idolatrous, and tyrannical:

for they shall not profit thee; secure from judgment here, or from wrath to come; nor justify before God, nor procure salvation and eternal life; but, on the contrary, shall bring deserved ruin and destruction, here and hereafter.

Ver. 13. *When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee, &c.*] From distress and impending ruin, if they can; meaning not the allies and auxiliaries of the Jews, the Egyptians and Assyrians, they sent to for help, as Kimchi, and others; rather, as Jarchi, their idols and graven images they worshipped, angels and saints departed, the Papists pray unto; let them now, in the time of Rome's ruin, renew their addresses to them for help and deliverance, if they can give it: or, "thy gathered ones"^{f1138}; the kings of the earth the whore of Rome has gathered unto her to commit fornication with her: and who, by her emissaries, will be gathered together to the battle of the Lord God Almighty, and to make war with the Lamb, but will be overcome; as also her many religious societies and convents of Jesuits, friars, priests, &c.; these will stand afar off, and lament her in her distress; even the kings and merchants of the earth, ship masters, and all company in ships, but will not be able to relieve her, (~~f683~~ Revelation 18:9-19):

but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them; so far will they be from helping her in the time of her calamity, that the wind of God's power and wrath shall carry them away as chaff; a puff of his "breath", or the least breath of air^{f1139}, shall dissipate them, and bring them to nothing; they will be no more able to stand before him than the lightest thing that can be thought of can stand before a blustering wind or tempest. The phrase denotes an utter and easy destruction of the whole jurisdiction and hierarchy of the church of Rome:

but he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain; such of God's people as will be in Babylon a little before its fall, and will be called out of it, who shall betake themselves to the Lord as their only refuge, and put their trust and confidence in him, rejecting all idolatry and superstitious worship, shall enjoy the communion of the true church of Christ, and partake of all the ordinances of it: it may be this may have also a particular respect unto the Jews, who will be called about this time; who, upon their believing in Christ, will return to their own land, and dwell in Jerusalem, God's holy mountain, as it used to be called. Hence it follows:

Ver. 14. *And shall say, cast ye up, cast ye up, &c.*] A causeway, a highway, for the people of the Jews to return to their own land: this is either said by the Lord, as some supply it; or by the prophet, as Jarchi; or by him that putteth his trust in the Lord, as Kimchi; or rather by one, that

is, the first of the living creatures, a set of Gospel ministers, that shall give to the angels, the Protestant princes and potentates, the seven last vials to pour out on the antichristian states, both Papal and Mahometan, and shall stir them up to do it; or the voice out of the temple, that shall order them to do their work; by which means way will be made for the return of the said people, (~~66:17~~ Revelation 15:7 16:1):

prepare the way; of the true doctrine and worship of God: the way of truth and holiness, of faith and practice:

take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people; the superstition, idolatry, and impiety of the church of Rome, are the great stumblingblock in the way of the conversion of the Jews, and the means of hardening that people in their disbelief of Christ and the Christian religion; wherefore the fall of antichrist, and a reformation everywhere from all corruption in doctrine and worship, in principle and practice, which also may be intended by these expressions, will prepare the way for their embracing the Christian religion, and so for their return to their own land. The Targum is,

“and he shall say, teach and admonish, prepare (or direct) the heart of the people to the right way, remove the stumblingblock of the wicked out of the way of my people.”

Ver. 15. *For thus saith the high and lofty One*, &c.] Who is high above the earth, and the nations of it; higher than the kings in it; the King of kings, and Lord of lords; and so able to save his people, and destroy his and their enemies; who is higher than the heavens, and the angels there; who is exalted above the praises of his people; the knowledge of whose being and perfections is too wonderful for them; whose thoughts are higher than theirs; and whose love has a height in it not to be reached by them; all which may serve to command a proper awe and reverence of him, and close attention to what he says; and perhaps these characters and titles are assumed in opposition to antichrist, who exalts himself above all that is called God, as well as what follows; who boasts of antiquity, and insolently takes to himself the title of Holiness: wherefore the Lord goes on to describe himself as

he that inhabiteth eternity: is from everlasting to everlasting, without beginning or end, the first and the last, who only hath immortality in and of himself; angels and the souls of men, though they die not, yet have a beginning; God only is from eternity to eternity; or rather inhabits one

undivided, uninterrupted, eternity, to which time is but a mere point or moment:

whose name is Holy: his nature being so; he is originally and essentially holy, and the source of holiness to his creatures, angels and men; though none are holy in comparison of him; his holiness is displayed in all his works; he is glorious in it; and therefore with great propriety holy and reverend is his name:

I dwell in the high and holy place; he dwelt in the most holy place in the tabernacle and temple, which were figures of the true sanctuary, heaven, where Jehovah dwells, and seems to be here meant; though the word “place” is not in the text; and it may be rendered, “I dwell with the high and holy”^{f1140}; and Aben Ezra, Kimchi, and Ben Melech, interpret it of the holy angels; and if we apply it to the holy and divine Persons in the Trinity, the Son and Spirit, it may not be amiss, and will stand well connected with what follows

with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit; not only with the other divine Persons, and with those high ones, but with such who are broken under a sense of sin; not merely in a legal, but in an evangelical way; not only with the weight of divine wrath, but with a view of pardoning grace and mercy; and such souls are humble as well as contrite; have the worst thoughts of themselves, and the best of others; they are humble under a sense of sin and unworthiness, and submit to the righteousness of Christ for their acceptance and justification before God; and ascribe the whole of their salvation to his free grace alone; and become cheerful followers of the meek and lowly Jesus; with such the Lord dwells, not merely by his omnipresence and omnipotence, but by his spirit and grace; or in a gracious way and manner, by shedding abroad his love in their hearts, and communicating his grace to them; and which he usually does under the ministry of the word and ordinances, and which may be expected: and his end in so doing is,

to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones; who are sometimes in a very lifeless and uncomfortable condition; grace is weak; sin is prevalent; they are under a sense of divine displeasure; under the hidings of God’s face, and attended with various afflictions and adverse dispensations of Providence: now the Lord dwells with them, to revive and quicken them; which he does by his gracious presence; by the discoveries of his pardoning love and grace; by the application of precious

promises; and by granting large measures of his grace, so that they become comfortable in their souls, and are quickened to the fresh exercise of grace, and discharge of duty. All this seems to be spoken for the consolation of the Lord's people in their low estate, during the reign of antichrist, and towards the close of it, when greatly oppressed by him. Vitringa interprets this of the Waldenses and Bohemian brethren; but it seems to respect later times.

Ver. 16. *For I will not contend for ever, &c.*] By afflictive providences; with the humble and contrite, the end being in a great measure answered by their humiliation and contrition; when God afflicts his people, it shows that he has a controversy with them, for their good, and his own glory; and when these ends are obtained, he will carry it on no longer:

neither will I be always wroth; as he seems to be in the apprehensions of his people, when he either hides his face from them, or chastises them with a rod of affliction:

for the spirit should fail before me; the spirit of the afflicted, which not being able to bear up any longer under the affliction, would sink and faint, or be "overwhelmed", as the word^{f1141} signifies:

and the souls which I have made; which are of God's immediate creation, and which are also renewed by his grace, and made new creatures. The proselytes Abraham made are called the souls he made in Haran, (^{<0125>}Genesis 12:5), much more may this be said of the Father of spirits, the author both of the old and new creation. The Lord knowing the weakness of the human frame, therefore restrains his hand, or moderates or removes the affliction; see a like reason in (^{<0938>}Psalm 78:38 103:9,13,14), the last days of trouble to God's people, which will be the time of the slaying of the witnesses, will be such that if they are not shortened, no flesh can be saved, but for the elect's sake they will be shortened, (^{<0122>}Matthew 24:22).

Ver. 17. *For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him, &c.*] Not the greedy watchmen of the church of Rome, (^{<2560>}Isaiah 56:10,11), but teachers and preachers in the reformed churches, who mind their own things, and not the things of Christ; seek after good benefices and livings, temporalities and pluralities, and to be lord bishops; taking the oversight of the flock for filthy lucre sake; which may easily be observed to be the predominant sin of the preachers and professors of the reformed churches; for which God has a controversy with them, and, resenting it, has

smote and rebuked them in a providential way; and has threatened them, as he did the church at Sardis, the emblem of the reformed churches, that he will come upon them as a thief, (~~Rev~~ Revelation 3:4).

I hid me, and was wroth: showed his displeasure by departing from them; and how much God has withdrawn his presence, and caused his spirit to depart from the churches of the Reformation, is too notorious:

and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart; took no notice of the reproofs and corrections of God; was unconcerned at his absence; not at all affected with his departure, and the withdrawings of his Spirit; these had no effect to cause a reformation, as is now too visibly the case; the same evil is pursued with equal eagerness; this is a way the heart of man is set upon, and they do not care to be turned out of it; and are like froward peevish children under the rod, receive no correction by it.

Ver. 18. *I have seen his ways, and will heal him*, &c.] Either the ways of such who trust in the Lord, the ways of the humble and contrite, who are brought by repentance and reformation, by the dealings of God with them; these he sees, knows, and approves of, and heals their former backslidings; for though not all, yet some may be reformed hereby; or rather the ways of the froward, their evil ways, which are their own ways in opposition to God's ways, peculiar to themselves, of their own devising and choosing; these the Lord sees, resents, and corrects for, and yet graciously pardons them, which is meant by healing:

I will lead him also; out of those evil ways of his into the good and right way in which he should go; into the way of truth and paths of righteousness; for it is for want of evangelical light and knowledge that so many err from the truths of the Gospel, and from the simplicity of Gospel worship; but in the latter day the Spirit of truth shall be poured down from on high, and shall lead professors of real religion into all truth, and they shall speak a pure language, and worship the Lord with one consent:

and restore comforts to him, and to his mourners; that mourn over their own sins, and the sins of others; that mourn in Zion, and for Zion; for the corruptions in doctrine and worship crept into the reformed churches; for the want of church discipline and Gospel conversation; for the declensions of professors of religion, and the divisions among them; and for that worldly, earthly, and carnal spirit that prevails; for these, as bad as our times are, there are some that mourn publicly and privately; and to these,

and to the church for their sakes, comfort shall be restored, by sending forth Gospel light, truth, and knowledge, which shall cover the earth as the waters the sea; by reviving primitive doctrines and ordinances; by blessing the word to the conversion of a multitude of sinners, and to the edification of saints; by causing brotherly love, peace, and spirituality, to abound among professors, and by blessing all the means of grace to the consolation of their souls; and by making particular applications of the blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ, for pardon, justification, and atonement, the solid foundation of all true comfort.

Ver. 19. *I create the fruit of the lips, &c.]* Which is praise and thanksgiving, (⁸¹³⁶Hebrews 13:16) that is, give occasion of it, afford matter for it, by restoring comforts to the church and its mourners, as in the preceding verse; and by giving peace, as in all the following words. The Targum renders it,


“the speech of the lips in the mouth of all men;”

as if it respected that blessing of nature, speech, common to all mankind: whereas this is a blessing of grace, peculiar to some that share in the above blessings; and it may be restrained to Gospel ministers, the fruit of whose lips is the Gospel of peace; or the word preaching peace by Christ; the word of reconciliation committed to them; the subject of their ministry, as follows:

peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; peace with God, made by Christ, is the fruit of Jehovah the Father’s lips, who promised it in covenant, on condition of Christ’s shedding his blood to make it; whence the covenant is called the covenant of peace; and spoke of it in prophecy, as what should be obtained by Christ the peacemaker; and peace of conscience flowing from it is the fruit of Christ’s lips, who promised to give it to, and leave it with, his disciples; and that they should have it in him, when they had tribulation in the world; and who also by his apostles went and

preached peace to them that were afar off, and to them that were nigh; having first made it by the blood of his cross, (⁸¹²⁷Ephesians 2:17) in which place there seems a manifest reference to this passage, when the Gospel was preached to the Jews that were near; to them in Judea first, from whence it first came; and then to the Gentiles that were afar off, as well as the dispersed Jews in distant countries; and in the latter day, to which this

prophecy refers, it will be preached far and near, even all the world over; when the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Gospel of peace, through the ministry of a set of men raised up by the Lord, created for that purpose, and eminently furnished for such service; the effect of which will be great spiritual peace in the hearts of God's people, and much concord, unity, and love among them, as well as there will be an abundance of external peace and prosperity; and when nations shall learn war no more. This Kimchi and Ben Melech take to be yet future, and what will be after the war of Gog and Magog: "and I will heal them"; of all their soul sicknesses and maladies; of all their divisions and declensions; of their carnality and earthly mindedness, before complained of; and even of all their sins and backslidings; and restore them to perfect health in their souls, and in their church state.

Ver. 20. *But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, &c.*] Disturbed by winds, storms, and hurricanes, when its waves rise, rage, and tumble about, and beat against the shore and sand, threatening to pass the bounds fixed for it. In such like agitations will the minds of wicked men be, through the terrors of conscience for their sins; or through the malice and envy in them at the happiness and prosperity of the righteous, now enjoyed, upon the downfall of antichrist; and through the judgments of God upon them, gnawing their tongues for pain, and blaspheming the God of heaven, because of their plagues and pains, ( Revelation 16:9,10,11):

whose waters cast up mire and dirt; from the bottom of the sea upon the shore; so the hearts of wicked men, having nothing but the mire and dirt of sin in them, cast out nothing else but the froth and foam of their own shame, blasphemy against God, and malice against his people.

Ver. 21. *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*] They have no share in the peace made by the blood of Christ; they have no true, solid, inward peace of conscience; nor will they have any part in the happiness and prosperity of the church and people of God in the latter day, which will but add to their uneasiness; and will have no lot and portion in the eternal peace which saints enjoy in the world to come; and of this there is the strongest assurance, since God, the covenant God of his people, has said it.