

ARTICLE IV.

THE CHARACTER AND PROPHECIES OF BALAAM.

Numbers XXII—XXIV.¹

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The second Prophecy.

As soon as Balaam had finished his first message, Balak cried out with astonishment and terror, What hast thou done to me? Instead of cursing Israel, for which I sent for thee, thou hast even pronounced a blessing upon him. This insinuation of Balak, that Balaam had betrayed the trust placed in him, he attempts to disprove by the plea that he acted from constraint: I would gladly have complied with your wishes and cursed this people, but must I not² speak what Jehovah putteth into my mouth? This double part which the soothsayer is attempting to play, his apparent readiness to submit to the commands of Jehovah and his wish, at the same time, to minister to the wicked desire of his employer, will ere long bring certain ruin upon him. His determination to obey the letter of the command with the utmost scrupulousness, is of no avail, so long as in inclination he sins against its whole meaning and design.

Balak is satisfied that he has the heart of Balaam on his side, and therefore looks about him for expedients to enable the soothsayer to withstand the power of the divinity, and to pour out curses upon his enemies. It does not appear that Balak desired him to act counter to the will of his God, but to bring his will into conformity with his own. This power was supposed to be-

¹ The Work most used in the preparation of this Article and the preceding one, in No. X., and on which they are to some extent based, is "Die Geschichte Bileams und seine Weissagungen. Erläutert von G. W. Hengstenberg, Dr. u. Prof. d. Theol. zu Berlin." Berlin, 1842. Frequent reference has also been made to "Die Geschichte Bileams," an Article in Tholuck's "Vermischte Schriften," Th. I. S. 406—432. Several Commentaries upon the passage, such as those of Calvin, Vater, Rosenmueller and Maurer, and Hengstenberg's "Authentie d. Pent." and Herder's "Sp. of Hebr. Poetry," have been occasionally consulted.

² This question is made by אֲנִי and consequently implies a strong affirmation: I must speak, etc. See Stuart's Transl. of Roediger's Ed. of Gesenius's Hebr. Gr. § 150. I.

long to the class of men among whom Balaam was reckoned. The influence of circumstances, such as position and the manner of offering sacrifices, was supposed to avail much with them. The view of the camp of Israel spread out before Balaam, his employer thought, might have given occasion to the blessing. He now, therefore, takes him to a more eastern part of Pisgah, called the watcher's field¹, where only the extreme part of the Israelitish camp could be seen. Here, as before, altars were constructed and the victims laid in order upon them, and Balaam again uttered the words which Jehovah had committed to him :

- Verse 18. Stand up, Balak, and hear,
Listen to me, son of Zippor.
19. God is not man, that he should lie,
Nor a son of man, that he should repent.
Hath he promised and shall he not perform?
Hath he spoken and shall he not make it good?
20. Behold I have received blessing;
He blesseth and I cannot avert it.
21. He doth not behold iniquity in Jacob,
He doth not see misfortune in Israel.
Jehovah his God is with him,
And the shouting of the king is in his midst.
22. God bringeth them out of Egypt,
In fleetness he is like the buffalo;
23. For no incantation availeth against Jacob
And no divination against Israel.
According to the time is it told to Jacob and Israel
What God doeth.
24. Behold, a people riseth up like a lioness,
Like a young lion it rouseth itself;
It shall not lie down, until it devour the prey,
And drink the blood of the slain.

Verse 18. *Stand up*, קים. This command did not of course require physical action; for Balak, as appears from verse 17, was already standing by his burnt-offerings. It merely demands his undivided attention to a matter of importance. The same word is frequently used in a similar manner, as in Judges 8: 20; and also in the Psalms, with קים appended, in making requests of Jehovah.

¹ Probably because of the extended eastern view, which rendered, in times of hostility, a favorable point from which to observe the motions or approach of enemies.

Listen to me, הִשְׁמָעוּ לִי. For the use of הִשְׁמָעוּ with the imperative, making it an urgent request, see p. 371 above, and Stuart's Transl. of Roediger's Gram. † 48. 3. 46. 2. As this appendage to nouns indicates direction to a place, so with verbs it denotes, striving after, or the direction of the will towards the object of any action. The Translators of the Septuagint, the Syriac and Samaritan versions,¹ seem to have derived the word שָׁמַע from שָׁמַע, *witness, testimony*; and Michaelis changes the reading to שָׁמַע, but without ground or reason. שָׁמַע with the suffix Pronoun is here nearly synonymous with שָׁמַע or שָׁמַע, which are often used with this same verb; compare Ex. 15: 26. Job 34: 2, 16, etc. and see Nordheimer's Hebr. Gram. II. p. 226. Compare also Job 32: 11, where שָׁמַע is used after הִשְׁמָעוּ. The meaning is: Listen attentively, so as to understand my meaning.—שָׁמַע is from שָׁמַע the construct state with י appended. This addition of י in the construct state is found in prose only in the Pentateuch; and in poetry, with two or three exceptions, only in הִשְׁמָעוּ which is copied from the Pentateuch; as in Ps. 50: 10—72: 2. 104: 11, 20. Zeph. 2: 14. Isa. 56: 9. This form, as well as that with י, is without doubt the remains of an ancient case-ending, almost obsolete in the time of Moses. In ancient Arabic the three case-endings ـ , ـ , and ـ are everywhere used. But in modern Arabic these terminations are almost entirely laid aside as case-endings. The Ethiopic, like the Hebrew (in הִשְׁמָעוּ), often retains the accusative-ending. See Stuart's Tr. of Roediger's Gram. † 88.

Verse 19. *God is not man*, לֹא אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים. לֹא a strong and absolute negative particle like the Greek οὐ, οὐκ, is frequently used before substantives and adjectives to denote the contrary of their usual meaning; as אֱלֹהִים לֹא, no-God = an idol. Here it denotes that God is not like, to be compared with man.—אִישׁ means here a *man, mortal*, in contrast with God, and is synonymous with בֶּן־אָדָם, son of man = mortal, in the next *stichos*. So also in Job. 9: 32 et alibi. The same word is frequently used as a designation of man in contrast with women, beasts, etc. *That he should lie*, וְיִשְׁכַּב. The Hebrew וְ is truly protean in signification. When used with verbs to indicate design or result, *that, in order that*, it is frequently followed in the first person by the paragogic, and in the second and third, by the apocopate forms of the verb, in those classes of verbs which make use of these forms; but not unusually as here the common form appears. See Gesenius' Thesaurus, וְ, and

¹ Sept. ἐνώρισαι μάρτυς, Syr. ܠܫܡܥܘܢܝܢ ܠܫܡܥܘܢܝܢ, listen to my testimony.

Stuart's *Ruediger*, † 152 L. 1. (B), (e), and † 126. The primary idea in *נָקַח*, a softened form for *נָקַץ*, is probably that of cutting, or breaking; hence to break covenant or faith, and in common use in the Piel, *to lie, to speak falsehood*. The spirit of the passage is well expressed by an old commentator: *Jam quum negat Deum mentiri posse, quia non est similis hominibus, species est objurationis. Quasi diceret, Visne Deum facere mendacum?—That he should repent, נִתְחַנֵּן*. The *ן* is used as in the preceding *stichos*.

The root of the verb *נִתְחַנֵּן*, *נָחַם*, seems to mean, like *نكس* in Arabic, *to pant, to groan*, and here in the Hithpael, *to grieve* for a past action, to change the course of conduct or feeling, *to repent*.

There is an evident reference in this verse to the views which Balak entertained of God. The reproach of Balaam in verse 11, "What hast thou done unto me? To curse my enemies I took thee," etc, in connection with the proposition, to go to another place where he should see but a part of the Israelites, in order if possible to change the curse to a blessing, implies that he believed that the purpose of God might be changed by a fortunate concurrence of circumstances, through the intervention of Balaam. But this verse would seem to be a specific confutation of that idea, and vindication of the Israelitish doctrine of the immutability of God, as exhibited even in the name Jehovah, (see Ex. 3: 13—16,) the self-existent one, consequently the one immutably changeless: *παρ' ἧ οὐκ ἔστι παραλλαγῆ ἢ τροπῆς ἀποσιώσμου*, James 1: 17. How far Balaam was indebted to immediate inspiration for this idea, it cannot be confidently asserted.—There is a plain allusion to this passage in 1 Samuel 15: 29, where Samuel says to Saul: "And also the strength of Israel will not lie nor repent; for he is not a man that he should repent."

Hath he promised, etc., *נִתְחַנֵּן אִם יְהוָה נָא*. *נִתְ* interrogative here makes the phrase more intensive than a simple affirmation, and indicates the impossibility and absurdity of supposing that God will not do according to what he has said. The question is naturally suggested whether this is to be understood as general or with a specific reference. The latter seems most probable from the use of the praeter tense both in *נִתְחַנֵּן* and *נִתְחַנֵּן*, see Hengst. Gesch. Bil. S. 109. Many have accordingly referred it to the promises made to the patriarchs. So the Targum of Jonathan: *Dominus dixit se multiplicaturum populum hunc sicut stellas coelorum, et in hereditatem illis daturum terram Cananaeorum, an fieri potest quod dixit ut non faciat?* But it seems rather to have regard to those

things spoken by God through Balaam in the previous prophecy, and to declare the impossibility of a change of the blessing there declared, according to Balak's desire and expectation. It is as if Balaam had said: I received from God the blessing that I pronounced, and his character does not permit me now to change it to a curse. This interpretation is confirmed by the following verse which is merely exegetical of this.—The verb יִקְרָאֵהוּ in the last clause of the verse, is in the Hiphil form, with the fem. suffix קָרָא used for the neuter. See Stuart's Hebr. Gr. § 321. 1. According to a very common idiom in Hebrew, the object is not expressed with the preceding verbs, אָמַר, בִּרְצוֹנִי and דִּבֶּר.

Verse 20. *Blessing*, בִּרְכָה, literally, *to bless*, is the Piel Infinitive, and בִּרְכָה in the next *stichos*, praet. 3 pers. sing. of the same conjugation. The use of the infinitive as a *nomen actionis* in the Accusative after a verb, is frequent in Hebrew, and gives a life and simplicity to the style, which is exceedingly pleasing; See Stuart's Roediger, § 128, I. and Herder's Spirit of Hebrew Poetry, Vol. I. 29 sq. The subject of בִּרְכָה is Jehovah implied in the preceding verse. The ו copulative need not here be rendered in English, as frequently where it connects two parallel members of a sentence,—*I cannot avert it*, אֲשִׁיבָהּ, קָרָא fem. suff. with an epenthetic nun, as in the preceding verse. The word אֲשִׁיב is used in a similar way, meaning *hinder* or *avert*, in Isaiah 43: 13. Balaam renounces all ability to do otherwise than he is commanded. The reasoning is: Man's word may be false, and he may repent of his most solemn asseverations, but God's declarations are unchanging. He hath pronounced blessings upon this people, and they will be bestowed; it is beyond my power to prevent it. Mark, as quoted by Hengstenberg, says: *Nec per temporis progressum, nec per loci mutationem, nec per repetitos conatus tuos quidquam obtinebis a deo, quando hic bona fide praedicta de hoc populo non revocabit unquam, nec in iis praestandis impediatur usque a quoquam, unde certus sis priora dicta mea amplissime fore implenda in Israele.*—Declarations similar to the one in this verse are common in later prophecies. Isa. 14: 27 and 45: 23. See Hengst. Gesch. Bil. S. 111.

Verse 21. In the preceding verses of this prophecy Balaam's object is to exculpate himself with Balak, by declaring his inability to curse contrary to the commands of an immutable God. With this verse he commences again to bless Israel, and both in matter and manner that which follows, is an expansion of the preceding prophecy. The main difficulty in this verse seems to be,

to determine the precise meaning of נָּא and בָּאָה . The Septuagint Translation, which some follow, is tame: $\text{ὄνκ ἔσται μὲν ὁσὸς ἐν Ἰακώβ οὐδὲ ὀφθήσεται πόνος ἐν Ἰσραήλ}$. Besides, in the preceding verse and the succeeding part of this verse, Jehovah is the subject of the verb, and a change to the passive here is without good reason. Hengstenberg, *Gesch. Bil.* 112, also derives an argument to the same effect from the parallel passages in Habakuk 1: 3, 13, which he says must have been written with the attention of the author directed to the passage now under consideration. There it is God, who, in verse 3rd, sees the בָּאָה , and both the נָּא and בָּאָה , in verse 13. The most probable explanation of נָּא seems to be, that it is used in its usual signification of *iniquity, wickedness*; and לֹא יִתְבַּחֵם means, not to take notice of by punishing, to *overlook*, as we sometimes say in English; so in the passages quoted, Hab. 1: 3 and 13; and so in Ps. 10: 14 תְּבַחֵם without the negative, signifies not to overlook, to punish. בָּאָה means the sorrow, the punishment, consequent upon iniquity. נָּא is often used for the joy felt at the destruction of one's enemies, as in Ps. 54, 9. 22: 16. 118: 7 et alibi; and here with the negative, the opposite of that: God does not look with delight upon the sorrow of his people. Rosenmueller prefers to consider the preposition אֶ as signifying *against* and renders: God beholds not, i. e. cannot endure to behold iniquity cast upon Jacob, nor can he bear to see affliction, vexation, trouble, wrought against Israel. This meaning seems to be perfectly congruous with the context, and the only difference in the two explanations is that in the one, iniquity and sorrow are subjective to the Israelites, whilst in the other they are inflicted upon them by their enemies. The former seems to be the most natural and easy exposition.

The shouting of the king is in his midst, $\text{וְהִרְוִיעַ מִלְּפָנָיו}$. The exclamations which attend the presence of a great and victorious king are among them. The noun וְהִרְוִיעַ is from רָוַע , to make a loud noise, to shout, to sound a trumpet; and hence the phrase here may be understood as referring to the presence of God as the victorious leader of the Israelites. This then is parallel with the preceding *stichos*, "God is with him." Calvin says: *Nomen enim quod alibi vetus Interpres Jubilationem vertit, videtur hic sumi pro gratulatoriis canticis. Sed quia tubae clangorum significat, non male quadrabit, populum fore terribilem suis hostibus; quia audacter prosiliet ac descendet in praelium, quasi Deo tuba clangente.*—This passage has been adduced in argument against the Mosaic origin of the account of Balaam, as implying that the

Israelites were governed by a king at the time of its composition. But it is only necessary to inquire if they were not surrounded by kingdoms, which might suggest this language; and furthermore, was not God their king, and might not the language be properly used in reference to him? See also Hengst. Beitr. III. S. 204, 5. and 246 sq. on the allusions in the Pent. to a future kingdom, and also note upon 24: 7 below.

Verse 22. *God bringeth them out of Egypt*, אֱלֹהִים מוֹצֵאֵם מִמִּצְרַיִם. In 22: 5, Balak in his message to Balaam says: A people have come out of Egypt, etc., but Balaam says here: God bringeth them out of Egypt. The use of the participle in this case indicates that the act is yet incomplete. See Ewald kl. Gr. † 350. They are not yet in the promised land. But all effort against them is without avail, the God who changes not is with them, and his plans cannot be thwarted by any opposition. His protection and guidance hitherto, is a sure guaranty that the work will be consummated. The use of a plural suffix here, with a singular one preceding and following, referring to the same collective noun, breaks up the monotony, and is entirely in accordance with Hebrew usage. The second *stichos* may perhaps be considered as a consequence of the preceding. It is on account of the favor of God which is shown in bringing them out of Egypt, that they have the vigor of the buffalo which will enable them to escape all enemies.

The vigor of the buffalo is his, מְרוֹצֵרוֹ רָצָה לוֹ. Literally, like the vigor of the Buffalo is to him. The precise signification of מְרוֹצֵרוֹ is difficult to determine. The Septuagint renders it by δόξα, the Vulgate, fortitudo. It is derived from the Hiphil form of רָצָה, to be weary, and hence may mean that which maketh weary, the vigorous. It is most often rendered, swiftness, and undoubtedly includes that idea, but is more comprehensive. Fürst considers it as from רָצָה, used by a common transposition of the letters for רָצָה, to be bright, shining; and hence he derives the idea of swiftness in the course, which he says is also found as a secondary meaning in other verbs of *shining*, *glittering*, etc. Hengstenberg does not fully assent to either of these meanings, and contends that, efforts, exertions, is the only one which is supported by the etymology, the context and the other passages in which the word is used; see Gesch. Bil. S. 119 sq. Whatever the etymology may be, the general idea is plain: Israel is able to escape his enemies, whatever qualifications they may have for annoying him. That רָצָה here designates the buffalo, *bos bubalus*, a wild

and ferocious animal, common in Palestine, seems to be pretty well decided. See this word in Gesenius' Lexicon.

2. For, *וְי*; what has been said of Israel is true, for, *וְי*, no enchantment, *וְיִרְאֵהוּ לֹא*, availeth against, *וְי*, Jacob and no divination, *לֹא יִרְאֵהוּ*, against Israel. Some, e. g. Hengstenberg, consider *וְי* here as meaning *in*: There is no enchantment in Israel, etc. i. e. they do not practise it. But there seems to be an allusion to the inability which Balaam felt, and expressed to Balak, of cursing the Israelites, since God blesses them. All such attempts, he says, are fruitless. Even this most celebrated soothsayer is compelled to acknowledge the futility of all the arts of his profession, when exerted against the purposes of God. But the last half of the verse is antithetical with this. According to the time, *בְּזֶמְנוֹ*, in the proper time, Sept. *κατὰ καιρὸς*, is it told, *וְיִרְאֵהוּ* to Jacob, etc. what God doeth, *וְיִרְאֵהוּ לֹא*. God maketh known his designs to Israel at the fitting time, whilst divination hath no power over him. For the use of the future *וְיִרְאֵהוּ*, *dici solet*, to designate customary action; see Ewald Gr. † 264, and Stuart's Ed. of Roediger's Gesen. † 125. 4. (b); and for the use of the praeter, *וְיִרְאֵהוּ*, for a future action, see Ewald, † 262, and Stuart's Roediger, † 124. 4. Many render *וְי* before *וְיִרְאֵהוּ* and *וְיִרְאֵהוּ*, concerning: Soon it shall be told concerning Jacob and Israel what God hath done for them. So Calvin: Deum praeclara opera exinde editurum pro defensione populi sui, quae cum admiratione narrentur. But this explanation destroys the antithesis, which seems plainly to be intended here, between divination and true prophecy.

Verse 24. Behold a people riseth up like a lioness. *וְיִרְאֵהוּ כְּלִיאוֹת*. The omission of the article which we might expect before *וְיִרְאֵהוּ*, may be considered as poetical. It gives life to the representation. It is as if the author had said: Behold this is a people, etc., extending his hand, perhaps, toward them. *וְיִרְאֵהוּ* is a poetic word from *וְיִרְאֵהוּ*, and means, literally, the roarer; here, as frequently, lioness. *וְיִרְאֵהוּ*, riseth up after repose, to seek his prey.—Like as a lion, *וְיִרְאֵהוּ*. *וְיִרְאֵהוּ* from *וְיִרְאֵהוּ*, to pull in pieces; hence the puller in pieces.—It will not lie down, *וְיִרְאֵהוּ*. This word is often used of persons lying down to sleep, and here, of returning to a state of repose; the exact reverse of *וְיִרְאֵהוּ* and *וְיִרְאֵהוּ*, it will not return to the state from which it has arisen, until it shall have devoured the prey, *וְיִרְאֵהוּ*. The image of the wild beast is here kept up, as also in the next *stichos*.

There is a plain allusion in this verse to Gen. 49: 9: "A young lion is Judah . . . he croucheth, he lieth down like a lion and a

lioness ; who will rouse him ? What is said of Judah in Genesis is applied by Balaam to all of Israel. The comparison should not be pressed too far. The cruelty and rapacity which might seem to be indicated, by devouring the prey and drinking the blood of the slain, are not intended. The strength and courage and nobleness of the lion, which feareth no open force or snares, but promptly resisteth all assaults, and attacketh his enemy with certainty of complete conquest, is what is here brought into view. Such is the antagonist against which Balak is contending, and to him he will surely fall a prey.

The Third Prophecy.

When Balak had listened to the second blessing of Israel, by him from whom he had hoped to hear nothing but curses, he seems for a moment to lose all expectation of accomplishing anything by means of Balaam, and only beseeches him, if he will not curse the people, at least not to bless them.¹ But when Balaam more positively than before affirms, that he is compelled to speak what is given him to speak by Jehovah, the king of Moab relying upon the strong desire of the soothsayer to comply with his request, again takes courage, and says to him : " Come now to another place, peradventure it may seem good to God that you curse him for me from thence. And he took him to the top of Peor," a height consecrated to the God of the Moabites of that name, which overlooked the desert of Jericho. After all preparation had been made as before, Balaam went not to seek enchantments, as on previous occasions, but relied upon the revelations of God's will, which had already been made to him. When he had turned his face to the desert, the direction in which the tents of the Israelites were pitched, and beheld them, each tribe in its own proper place in the encampment, " The spirit of God came upon him, and he spake the words of his prophecy and said :"

Verse 3. Thus saith Balaam the son of Beor,

Thus saith the man with closed eyes,

4. Thus saith he who heareth the words of God,

Who seeth the visions of the Almighty,

Falling down, and with open eyes :

¹ Nordheimer, Heb. Gram. § 1096. 5, renders the phrase גַּם קִבְּלָהּ תְּבַרְכֶנּוּ גַם לֹא תְבַרְכֶנּוּ ; neither curse them at all nor bless them at all.

5. How beautiful are thy tents, Jacob,
Thy dwellings, Israel ;
6. Like valleys they are spread out,
Like gardens by the river's side,
Like aloes which Jehovah hath planted,
Like the fir-tree by the water-courses.
7. Water floweth from his buckets,
And his seed is upon many waters.
Higher than Agag his king shall be,
And exalted shall be his kingdom.
8. God bringeth him forth from Egypt,
The vigor of the Buffalo is his ;
He devoureth the nations his enemies,
And their bones he crauncheth,
And with his arrows he dasheth in pieces.
9. Like a lion he croucheth and lieth down to rest,
And like a lioness who will rouse him.
Blessed are those who bless thee,
And cursed are thy cursers.

Verse 3. The poetical word נָאֵם, from נָאֵם, like נָבִיל from נָבַל, three times repeated here, and also in verses 15, 16, is seldom used with the genitive of a human author; Hengstenberg says, it never is, except in Numbers xxiv, and 2 Samuel 23 : 1, and Prov. 30 : 1, which last are imitations of the prophecies of Balaam. It is very often used with הִתְהַוָּה, as נָאֵם הִתְהַוָּה, especially in the later prophecies; see Hengstenberg, *Authentic* L 359, and *Gesch. Bil. S.* 133. It seems natural then to suppose that Balaam uses the word here to indicate that he received his oracles, and communicated them, from God. So Mark : non aliter se spectat tamen, quam ut dictorum ministrum, quae ipsi aliunde inspirarentur.— נָבִיל in the construct state before נָבִיל with וְ paragogic; see note on 23 : 18. The repeated use of this antique form is certainly unaccountable, if the prophecies of Balaam were written subsequently to the age of Moses. That it was not current in the time of David, appears from the change to נָבִיל in his imitation of our passage, in 2 Sam. 23 : 1, where we should naturally expect the same form.

With closed eyes, שָׂרָם הִצְתִּין. The word שָׂרָם is considered by Rosenmueller, Maurer, Gesenius and others, as meaning *open*. The Septuagint too renders this phrase: φησὶν ὁ ἄσθρωνος ὁ ἀληθινῶς ὁρῶν, and the Chaldee Paraphrase, נִבְרָאָה הַשְׂמִירָה הַזֵּה (vir pulchre videns). But Fürst and Hengstenberg seem to be right in giving

it the opposite meaning of *closed*. There is no foundation in Hebrew for the signification of the word given by Gesenius and others mentioned above, and the reference to the Chaldee for this meaning, of which Buxtorf cites only one instance from the Mishna, is more than counterbalanced by the current use in the

Arabic of سَطَمَ with the meaning *to shut*. This signification is easily derived according to the principles of the Hebrew. The stronger hissing sounds of the language which prevailed in earlier times, were afterward exchanged for the softer sounds; as, for example, ש for ט and ט; see Ewald's Gram. § 104 sq. Now טָטַע, טָטַע is used later and in prose, with the meaning, *to stop, to obstruct*, and secondarily, *to shut up*; see 2 Kings 3: 19, 25, et alibi. What is more natural than to suppose that the more ancient and harsh form of the same word is used by Balaam? This opinion is made more probable by the tautology which, if the other meaning is given, is made by אָלַי טָטַע in the next verse. But the precise import of the phrase is not determined, when we have fixed upon the literal meaning of the words. Calvin interprets, *concealed or closed eyes* as those which can see hidden things: absconditos sibi esse oculos dicit quia arcana inspectione pollut supra humanum modum. Le Clerc supposes that there is here an allusion to not seeing the angel on the way. According to others, Balaam declares his previous blindness in reference to the fate of the Israelites, or refers to the hidden nature of all future things. But none of these explanations seem to be in accordance with the context, which requires something that will add weight to the words of the following prophecy. This and the following verse are made up of personal designations of Balaam as introductory to the truth which he is about to reveal. This phrase then seems to designate one characteristic of the state in which Balaam as a prophet, uttering his oracle, was; i. e. with eyes closed, shutting out the sensible world, so that the internal sense might be undisturbed in its action. When persons wish to think intently upon anything, they close their eyes and ears; and the more effectually impressious from the external world are shut out, the more vigorous is the action of the mind. This closing of the external senses should seem peculiarly necessary in the case of Balaam, who was ordinarily unused to such revelations as the present, and consequently to such an employment of his mental faculties.

Verse 4. *The hearer of the words of God*, אֵל אֶקְרִי אֵל. One

to whom God speaks, not audibly, but to the internal sense, when the spirit comes upon him. *Who seeth the visions of the Almighty,* אָזַר כִּדְמוּת סִבְרֵי יְהוָה. This language is derived from the manner in which God revealed himself, especially in more ancient times, by visions, but is used here like the accompanying *stichoi*, generically, as a designation of Balaam's character as prophet.

Falling down, נָפַל; literally, *the faller down*, the present participle being used to denote character, permanent qualities. The powerful influence of the spirit which like an armed man came upon the seer, seems to be indicated by this phrase. So it was with Saul when the spirit of God was upon him, 1 Sam. 19: 24, "And he also, נָפַס דָּוִדָּה, stripped off his clothes," which Michaelis explains: *exuit vestes consuetas et induit sacras pauciores et leviores*; "and fell down naked, נָפַל קָרָם, all that day and all that night. Therefore they said: Is Saul also among the prophets?" This *he also* in the beginning of the verse should seem to indicate that this was a usual effect of the prophetic spirit at the time. But we are not to suppose that it was universal. In the good Samuel, for example, such violent physical action as falling to the ground, could hardly have been exhibited. It seems to have been only where the spirit found an unprepared dwelling, where there was an unfitness in the subject, that such consequences ensued. Where there was in ordinary life a consciousness of the indwelling of the spirit, as in the true prophets, it was not so. It then came to its own and its own received it. It is true that such passages as Ezek. 1: 28. 3: 23. 43: 3. Dan. 8: 17, 18, and Apoc. 1: 17, seem at first view to be parallel with this; but a closer examination shows that it was the overpowering nature of the vision that caused terror and awe in such cases.—The close connection of the following phrase, *with eyes open*, i. e. attentive to the heavenly messenger, with the *falling down*, is evident. Thus the Vulgate renders the verse in connection: *dixit auditor sermonum dei, qui visionem omnipotentis intuitus est, qui cadit et sic aperuntur oculi ipsius.*

Verse 5. In reference to the preceding verses of the prophecy which have been taken up with the characteristics of the seer, as preparatory to the annunciation now to be made, Calvin says: *Non alio tendit tota præfatio, nisi ut se verum dei prophetam esse probet et benedictionem quam proferet se habere ex coelesti oraculo.* With this verse Balaam again resumes the subject of the last oracle, the prosperity of Israel. *How beautiful,* כִּי־יָבִיב, how fair, pleasing are thy tents, אֶזְרָאֵיךָ. The language here

seems to have been suggested to the prophet by the previous view of the encampments of Israel, as his physical eyes were now closed, verse 3. But the idea is not merely that the present condition of the encampment of Israel, is one that pleases the eye of the beholder; nor is the vision of the seer confined to the future, as de Geer supposes: *Videre sibi videtur Balaam Israelitas jam in regione Canan. habitantes et fortunatissimam eorum sedem.* The general prosperity of Israel both now and in the future is indicated by the phrase, 'How beautiful are thy tents,' and the subsequent comparisons, by which the same idea is presented more vividly to the mind. For the use of the *praeter tense* to indicate abiding characteristics or qualities, see Stuart's *Roed.* § 124. 4.—*Thy dwellings*, מִשְׁכְּנֶיךָ. The original distinction between מִשְׁכָּן and מִדְּבַר, as applied to the tabernacle is that the former designates the dwelling proper, the twelve interior curtains; and the latter, the exterior covering of the same. Here they are both used without distinction in meaning, as names of the temporary dwellings of the Israelites.

Verse 6. The exclamation in the 5th verse, "How beautiful are thy tents," etc. is illustrated in this verse, by a series of comparisons: (1) *Like valleys they are spread out*, מְתַהַלְמִים נָחָי. The word מְתַהַלְמִים is from נָחַל, which signifies, first, a stream or brook, and then the brook or torrent with the adjoining land, the valley or wady, as it is termed in the East. Although many prefer the former, the latter meaning seems most appropriate here, since the following comparisons are with objects not in the water but on the shore. נָחַי is a verb from נָחַה, to stretch out, to extend, here in the Niph., of the valley or stream, to spread itself out, used in *Zech* 1: 16 of a measuring line, and in *Jer.* 6: 4 of evening shadows. The object of this verb is considered by many to be a relative referring to מְתַהַלְמִים, the valleys which are spread out. The LXX, rather fancifully render the phrase: *ὡσεὶ ῥάνας σπαύζουσαι*; but it is an easier and more natural construction to supply a pronoun referring to tents and dwellings in the preceding verse.—(2) *Like gardens by the river's side*, מְתַהַלְמִים כְּגַרְדֵּי נְהַר, literally like gardens on or near streams of water, such as pass through the oriental wadys. The simple idea is, that they are like well-watered gardens. Two passages in *Isaiah* illustrate the meaning of this simile; 58: 11, Thou shalt be like a *watered garden*, and 1: 31, where the wicked are compared to a garden which has no water. The dependence of the gardens of the East for fertility, upon irrigation from streams of water, must be taken into the account in order to

feel the full force of these words.—(3) *Like alces which Jehovah hath planted*, כִּי־עֵץ מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל עֲבָרָה. The עֲבָרָה is a species of odoriferous tree, growing in India. This tree itself, from its fragrance, is an object of comparison quite suitable to enhance the idea of excellence as applied to the tents; but the force of the similitude is increased by the qualification, "which Jehovah hath planted," answering to the phrase, "by the river's side" and "by the water" in the preceding and following parallels. Trees planted by Jehovah are those which have a location favorable to growth and beauty. Ps. 104: 16, "Satisfied are the trees of the Lord (by the rain which he sends, see verse 13), the cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted." Calvin says: dicuntur arbores a Deo plantatæ, quæ ob singularem præstantiam excedunt communem naturæ modum. For the ellipsis of עֲבָרָה, which, after עֲבָרָה, see Stuart's Heb. Grammar, † 563. (4) *Like the fir-tree by the water courses*. The same image as before. They are like the noble cedar or fir-tree, where it grows most luxuriantly, near the water.

Verse 7. Through the two preceding verses, *tents* is the grammatical subject, although the mind of the seer seems to slide gradually from the consideration of the tents to the people themselves, which in this 7th verse are the subject.—*Water floweth from his buckets*, מֵאֲבָקֵי־יָדָיו יִשְׁרָף. מֵאֲבָקֵי in the plural has a singular verb agreeing with it, as often when the verb precedes, and sometimes when it follows. See Stuart's Heb. Gram. † 489. יִשְׁרָף is put in the dual number, from the practice of carrying two buckets, one on each side; Ewald kl. Gram. † 362. Nordheimer, † 563. 2. The idea suggested here seems to be that of a multitude, which is not unusual in Hebrew, where the dual number is used; Stuart's Gram. † 329, Note 1. Nordheimer, † 563. 1. Hengstenberg, however, considers that the whole people are personified, and represented as one individual, bearing two buckets. Water here appears to be used, as often in the Bible, as a symbol for blessing and prosperity. So in Is. 44: 3, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring."—Buckets running over with water, indicate abundant prosperity. According to the common interpretation, the declaration: "water floweth from his buckets," designates simply a numerous posterity. Gesenius in his Thesaurus explains it thus: larga erit posteritas ejus, metaphora ab aqua de situla destillante ad semen virile translata. Without doubt a numerous posterity is implied, but only as that indicates, and is the result of general prosperity. For

the idea of the bestowment of favor, blessing, is more accordant with the preceding verse, and with the following members of the sentence, "His seed is upon many waters," and "Higher than Agag his king shall be." Besides, while water is often used in the Bible, as a symbol of blessing and the consequent prosperity, it does not seem ever to be employed as represented by Gese-nius. See Hengstenberg, *Gesch. Bil.* S. 147.

And his seed is upon many waters, וְיִרְדּוּ בְּמַיִם רַבִּים. His seed, יִרְדּוּ, is unquestionably a designation of posterity, offspring; so often. *Upon many waters,* indicates that his posterity shall be, and continue to be abundantly blessed. The verse in Isaiah (44: 4), following the one quoted in illustration of the preceding phrase, is applicable here: "And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses." Parallel also is Deut 8: 7, "For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills." Isaiah 65: 23 is accurately coincident in sentiment with the two preceding *stichoi*: "For they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them."

Higher than Agag his king shall be, וְיִרְדּוּ מִן אֲגָג כְּמֶלֶךְ. The verb יִרְדּוּ is in the *apocopate* (jussive) future from יָרַד, but without any speciality of meaning here, unless with Hengstenberg we consider the phrase as *Optative*. כְּ for כִּי indicates comparison; so frequently after verbs of quality. See Stuart's *Heb. Gram.* † 454, Note. אֲגָג has been supposed by many to be the proper name of an individual king of Amalek, whom Saul conquered, 1 Sam. 16: 8. But it seems rather to be a common appellative of the Amalekitish kings, like Pharaoh for the kings of Egypt, Abimelech for those of the Philistines, etc. For in the first place, the signification of the word as traced in the Arabic, accords with this explanation. The adjectives أَجَاجٌ, and أَجَاجٌ, from the root أَجَجَ, signifying, according to Freytag, valdè ardens, rutilans, splendens, are certainly not unsuitable, as *nomina dignitatis* of the kings of Amalek. The designation of Haman as the Agagite, אֲגָגִי, in Esther 3: 1, 10, also confirms this explanation, and Rosenmueller, Maurer and others concede its justness. It is also entirely in harmony with the spirit and form of the prophecies of Balaam. An individual is nowhere else mentioned in them. The whole character of the prophecies is rather ideal than specific and definite. Had the conquered king been designated by name, we should certainly expect the name of the conqueror, David or Saul, to accompany

it. Besides, the last prophecy, which is the conclusion of the whole revelation, is evidently intended to be more definite in its allusions than the three preceding; for in them no individual nation even, is alluded to, except in this verse, which should seem to be a sort of gradation, from which to ascend to the last and highest strain of prophecy. But if an individual king is mentioned by name here, all climax, which is so conspicuous elsewhere in these oracles, is destroyed, as no individual *person* is specified in the last prophecy.

Those who exert themselves to prove a specific reference to Agag in this verse, in order to make out a prophecy *post eventum*, labor as those who beat the air, for it is not supposable that an author, who elsewhere sustains the character assumed so well, should so palpably and foolishly betray himself here. Among the older expositors, Calvin expresses a very decided opinion in favor of the interpretation given above: 'Most improbable is it,' he says, 'that Saul is referred to here, who being victorious in war took Agag king of the Amalekites captive. Others have a right understanding of the passage, who suppose that this is the common name of the kings of that nation.'—It is not strange that the king of the *Amalekites* is the subject of the comparison, as they were not only the bitter but the most powerful enemies of the Israelites.

The reference here to the establishment of royal authority in Israel is based upon the promises to the patriarchs, which speak of it, as an established fact, that kings shall arise in Israel, and that with them shall come the highest prosperity of the nation. Thus Calvin says: *Etsi autem longo post tempore in Israele nemo regnavit, non absurdum est tamen regis et regni nomine publicum statum designari; præsertim quia deus solidam gratiæ suæ perfectionem in tempus usque regni distulerat.* See Gen. 17: 6. 35: 11. It is also evident that the people of Israel, in consequence of being surrounded by nations who were governed by kings, early imbibed a longing for a royal government among themselves; compare Deut 17: 14 and 1 Sam. 8: 5.

In the last words of this verse: Exalted shall be *his kingdom*, the Targum of Jerusalem substitutes for "his kingdom," "the kingdom of the Messiah." But, although there is without doubt an allusion to the Messianic kingdom, inasmuch as the kingdom of Israel only arrived at its highest grade of development at the appearance of the Messiah, yet there is no such definite and pre-

cise reference as warrants that paraphrase; see further upon this point under verse 19th below.

Verse 8. The first part of this verse is merely a repetition from 23: 22, to which the reader is referred for an explanation. The last part, is a further expansion of the same idea, showing what will be the result of God's bringing Israel out of Egypt, and bestowing power upon him, in regard to his enemies: He shall devour them, as a wild beast devoureth, craunching their bones. *And with his arrows, יִצְרֹף shall he crush* (smite through and through), יִצְרֹף. Throughout this verse, as in the preceding and following verses, Israel is spoken of in the singular number. יִצְרֹף may here be considered as in the accusative, see Ewald's Heb. Gr. 486. 3. a.; and the suffix יִצְרֹף seems to refer to Israel and not to his enemies, as has sometimes been supposed. This last member of the parallelism is apparently added as an explanation of the two preceding, in order to show in what way Israel is to accomplish the destruction of his enemies, i. e. by victory in war. The LXX. render it, *καὶ ταῖς βολαῖς αὐτοῦ κατατοξέσουσιν*. Vulg.: *et perforabunt sagittis*.

Verse 9. In the first part of verse 9th the image of a wild beast is again resumed, and made more forcible by the specification of the most noble and powerful of all beasts, the lion, as in 23: 24. The allusion here to Gen. 49: 9, "He boweth himself and lieth down," etc. is too plain to be mistaken.

Those that bless thee, shall be blessed, etc. בְּרֵכְךָ יְבָרְכֶךָ. This declaration is founded upon the promise in Gen. 27: 29 and 12: 3. It is directed to Israel, and points to the fate of Balaam, should he comply with the wish of Balak. In a general way it declares what is more specifically explained in the next prophecy, verses 18—24. The singular predicates in connection with plural subjects, is accounted for by supposing that those who are blessed or cursed are considered individually: Every one who blesses you shall be blessed, etc. See Stuart's Roediger † 143. 4. The spirit of this passage is well given in a few words by Calvin: *hæc loquendi formula significat, ea lege electos a deo fuisse Israelitas, ut sibi impensum referat, quidquid illis vel injuriæ illatum, vel beneficii collatum fuerit.*

The fourth Prophecy.

The gradual development of the intentions of God, in reference to the Israelites and their enemies, in the prophecies of

Balaam, is evident to any one who gives them even a superficial examination. In the first, there is merely a renunciation of the ability to curse the people whom Jehovah blesses, and a general declaration of the favor which attends them. In the second, the utter impossibility of any misfortune's resting upon those in whom Jehovah delighteth, and the certainty that they will prevail over all their enemies, is brought to view. In the third, prosperity is much more vividly represented by imagery drawn from the familiar objects of nature, and not only the certainty of the prevalence of the Israelitish kingdom over the nations, its enemies, is indicated, but also that even all who bless it shall be blessed, and all who curse it, shall be cursed. In the fourth, not merely blessing and cursing in general are foretold, but the particular hostile nations over which Israel shall prevail, are introduced by name; and it is affirmed that whilst his enemies shall receive the destruction which they had designed for him, he shall be favored even to the most distant ages.

The division of this last prophecy which is the consummation of the whole revelation, into four distinct parts, by the phrase: *וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר־אָמַרְתִּי־לָךְ*, which precedes each of the prophecies, thus making seven parts in all, corresponding to the seven altars and the seven victims, cannot have been without design.

After the third communication of Balaam, Balak could no longer restrain his anger, but smote his hands together and said: I called thee to curse my enemies and behold, on the contrary, thou hast blessed them these three times. Now get thee away quickly to thine own place. I promised to bestow great favor upon thee, but this Jehovah whom thou pretendest to serve hath withheld thee from riches and honor. Balaam in vindication of himself replies: I have done according to the conditions specified to the messengers; for I said to them, if Balak should give me his house full of silver and gold I cannot oppose Jehovah, by saying anything which he shall not enjoin upon me to declare. But now I go to my people; yet I must first make known to thee what this people shall do to thine in future ages.

Verse 15. And he uttered his prophecy and said:

Thus saith Balaam the son of Beor,

Thus saith the man with closed eyes,

16. Thus saith he who heareth the words of God,

And understandeth the knowledge of the Most High;

Who seeth the visions of the Almighty,
Falling down and with open eyes.

17. I see him, but not now,
I behold him, but not near;
A star goeth forth from Jacob,
And a sceptre ariseth from Judah,
It smiteth Moab on every side,
And destroyeth all the sons of tumult.
18. Edom is his possession,
And Seir his enemy is in his power;
Israel doeth valiantly.
19. Dominion goeth forth from Jacob,
And destroyeth the remnant from the city.
20. Then he looked towards Amalek, and uttered his prophecy
and said:
The first of the nations is Amalek,
Yet his end shall be complete destruction.
21. And he looked towards the Kenites, and uttered his proph-
ecy and said:
Established is thy dwelling,
And placed in a high rock is thy nest.
22. But Kain shall be for wasting,
Until Assyria shall lead thee captive.
23. And he uttered his prophecy and said:
Alas who shall live
When God doeth this?
24. Ships shall come from Chittim,
And subdue Asshur, and subjugate Eber,
And even they shall be destroyed.

Verses 15, 16. These verses correspond to the third and fourth with the addition of one *stichos* which gives a farther characteristic of the seer: "The one who knoweth the knowledge of the Most High."

17. *I see him*, אֲנִי רֹאֶה אֹתוֹ. Three explanations have been given of the pronoun אֹתוֹ, which is the object of the verb רֹאֶה. Some suppose it should be rendered as neuter, *it*; but in that case the feminine would probably have been used, especially as the masculine would be so liable to be referred to the nouns which follow. Others suppose that the pronoun is used directly for Israel;

and still others, that it is employed with immediate reference to כֹּכַב and סֵפֶרֶט, the star and sceptre, which follow. The meaning is substantially the same whichever of the last two explanations is adopted. But it seems most natural to suppose that it is the star and sceptre that are designated by the pronoun. At so unexpected a vision as opened itself to the eyes of the prophet, he naturally exclaims, without explaining what it is: "I see him, I behold him." It is also common in Hebrew, to use the pronoun before the noun to which it refers; compare 23, 9, p. 374 above.—But not now, וְלֹא עַתָּה, i. e. not as a present object, but in spirit, in the future, in the last days, בְּאַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים. This seems to confute one argument which has been used, for referring directly to Israel as the object of the vision. The position of Balaam looking down upon the tents of Israel spread out before him, would naturally, it has been said, lead him to cry out in reference to them: "I see him." But what was beheld was not present but future, and consequently not the camp of Israel. For the use of the future form of the verb as present, see Stuart's Roediger, † 105. 2.

A star goeth forth out of Jacob, כֹּכַב מִיַּעֲקֹב יֵצֵא. This, with what follows, is a more specific designation of the vision spoken of in the preceding part of the verse. A star is so natural an image of the greatness and splendor of rulers, that it is so used by almost all nations. The birth and accession to the throne of great kings was believed to be often signalized by the unusual appearance of stars. See Justin, B. 37. c. 2. Pliny, Nat. Hist. B. 2. c. 23. Suetonius, Jul. Caes. c. 78. Dio Cassius, B. 45. S. 273, and compare p. 175 above.—The next *stichos*, *a sceptre ariseth from Israel*, seems to be based upon Genesis 49: 10: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come." In both passages the sceptre is plainly an emblem of dominion.—But what, specifically, was meant by this star and sceptre? Did they designate some particular king of Israel who was to appear, and make his reign glorious by the conquest of his enemies? So it has often been explained. Grotius says: David designatur, illustris inter reges, qui Moabitas partim interfecit, partim sibi subiecit, 2 Sam. 8: 2 (with which compare Ps. 60: 8 and 108: 9); and his explanation has been copied by many modern interpreters. See Verschuir, Biblioth. Brem. nova class. III. 1. p. 1—80, quoted by Hengstenberg, Christol. I. p. 64, who refers this verse to David and to John Hyrcanus, and the 19th verse to Alexander Jannæus; Michaelis, Dathe and De Wette also

refer it to David. But there seems to be satisfactory evidence that no king of Israel, is here specifically alluded to; the idea is, that dominion, and a conquering power shall arise in Israel, and that this dominion will reach its consummation only in the Messiah.

1. It is contrary to the analogy of the prophecies of Balaam and even of the whole Pentateuch, to suppose that an Israelitish king is designated. No so definite allusion to a future king is anywhere to be found in it. 2. The sceptre, *מַטֵּה* does not naturally personate an individual ruler, but dominion in general. 3. On the contrary, there are frequent references in the Pentateuch to the prosperity and perpetuity of the kingdom of Israel. In Gen. 17: 6 it is said: 'Kings shall go forth from thee.' In the 16th verse of the same chapter, the promise is made to Abraham, that 'Sarah shall be for nations, and kings of the people shall be from her.' According to Gen. 35: 11, God promises Jacob, that he shall be a 'nation and a company of nations, and kings shall go forth from his loins.' See also the explanation of verse 3d, above.

But even allowing that this reference is to the future dominion of Israel, what proof is there that Balaam's vision extended to the Messianic age? 1. This passage was understood to refer to the Messiah either exclusively or with a secondary reference to David, by the ancient Jews. Onkelos translates it: Quando surget rex ex Jacob et ungetur Messias ex Israel. Jonathan also: Cum surget rex fortis ex domo Jacob et ungetur Messias et scesptrum forte ex Israel. For abundant additional proof, see Schöttgen, *Jesus Messias*, p. 151. The extent of the belief is evident from the fact, that the Pseudo-Messias of the time of Adrian took from this prophecy the surname of Bar Chochab, 'son of the star;' and on this account received the homage of the Jews, who supposed that in him, the prophecy of Balaam was fulfilled. It is true that the force of this argument is much diminished by the fact that, since it favored their expectations of a worldly prince as Messiah, they would be inclined to adopt this interpretation. 2. Most of the church fathers and early interpreters referred it to the Messiah. For passages from the early fathers, see Calovius, and among early commentators compare Calvin and Le Clerc.

3. The words *בְּאַחֲרֵי יָמֵי*, 'at the end of days,' in verse 14th, compared with the phrases 'not now,' *לֹא עַתָּה*, and 'not near,' *לֹא קָרוֹב*, as pointing to some far distant time, favor this interpretation. These words are rendered by the Septuagint, in verse 18th, *ἐν ἰσχυραῖς τῶν ἡμερῶν*, in other places generally *ἐν ταῖς σοφῆταις ἡμέραις*, and in the Chaldee Paraphrase, *בְּכֹחַ יְיָ*, and in

the prophets, they commonly have reference to the last stage of the developments of the kingdom of God upon the earth.

4. Similarity to other Messianic prophecies, is an argument a similar explanation in this. The references in the Pentateuch, to a Saviour to come at some future time, are of a general character. We first find in connection with the curse pronounced upon man after the fall, Gen. 3: 14, 15, an allusion to the fact, that the seed of the woman shall finally triumph over the tempter and over all evil. There is no indication of the means by which, much less of the individual by whom, this conquest is to be achieved. We next find in Gen. 9: 26, 27, that the descendants of Shem are to be the subjects of the special favor of God, through whom deliverance will be finally obtained.¹ Subsequently it is more specifically said to Abraham, that "through him," Gen. 18: 8, and "through his seed," Gen. 22: 18, "all the families of the earth shall be blessed." The same promise is confirmed to Isaac, Gen. 26: 4, and to Jacob, Gen. 28: 14; where the phrases "through him," and "through his seed," are combined in one promise. In the address of Jacob to his sons, Gen. 49: 10, just before his death, in which he makes known to them what shall befall them in the last days, it is said: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh, (the pacificator, the peacemaker,) come, and him shall the nations obey." Hengstenberg gives the meaning of this passage in the following words: "Judah shall not cease to exist as a tribe, nor lose its superiority, until it shall be exalted to higher honor and glory, through the great Redeemer who shall spring from it, and whom not only the Jews, but all the nations of the earth shall obey."²

The gradual development of the idea of a Messiah to come, must be apparent to any one who examines these passages, which could be merely alluded to here; and the appropriateness of the prediction in the prophecies of Balaam to the time in which he lived, and their agreement, if interpreted as Messianic, in spirit and manner with those promises previously made to the patriarchs, are certainly no inconsiderable arguments in favor of such an interpretation.

5. The fundamental idea of this prophecy seems to be, the victory of the people of God over the heathen world, as represented by the nations enumerated in subsequent verses. But this could not be said to be achieved by any one of the kings of Israel. After

¹ See Hengstenberg's *Christol.* I. 41 seq.

² *Ibid.* Vol. I. p. 59.

David's victories over the Moabites, for example, they soon recovered, and again annoyed Israel and were again the subjects of severe threatening. Neither could all of the kings of Israel be said to have achieved a victory over the heathen, which seems to be commensurate with the spirit and design of this prophecy. Indeed the kingdom of Israel, for all the purposes which it was designed to accomplish, was, without the Messiah, but a trunk without a head. The reign of the anointed one, the priest-king, was the great glory which was foretold to patriarch and prophet, at first but indistinctly, but more and more clearly, as the fulness of time for his appearing approached. It has been well said: *felicitem populi locat in regno. Unde colligimus statum ejus non aliter fuisse perfectum quam ubi per manum regis gubernari coepit. Nam quia in Christo fundata est adoptio generis Abrahae, illic nonnisi scintillae benedictionis Dei micarunt, donec in Christo ipso solidus splendor fuit conspicuus.*

6. The last reason that I shall adduce for the Messianic allusion in the star and sceptre is, that it is recognized as such in the New Testament. Throughout the narrative in Matt. 2: 1 sq. a prominence is given to the appearance of the star, which we should not expect, unless it had been considered by the author as foretold in the prophecies of the Old Testament; see verses 2, 7, 9, 10. But if any where, it certainly must be in the passage under discussion. It is at least evident, that it was a general belief of the age, that a star would appear, to signalize the birth of the Messiah. The Magi on its appearance, announced it to Herod as something that was expected. They also show no hesitation as to its import: "Where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen *his* star in the east, and are come to worship him." But not the Magi only seem to have thus understood this phenomenon. Neither Herod nor the people, so far as it appears in the narrative, doubted its significance. They make no inquiry in reference to the connection between this star and the birth of the Messiah. But when Herod had heard of its appearance, "he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." Now this excitement could not have existed, if there had not been a general expectation of this celestial visitant, and certainty in regard to its object. Wieseler after adducing the argument for this belief concludes: "The expectation of a star of the Messiah, must hence be assumed as having already formed a part of the faith of the Jewish nation. Even the mythic view cannot deny it."¹

¹ See further in the Article translated by Mr. Day, p. 175 and 6, above.

It has often been objected to a reference of this belief to the prophecy of Balaam as its foundation, that it would, in that case, have been so announced by Matthew. But there is no sufficient ground for this objection. Matthew often gives mere hints, without specific reference to the passage in the Old Testament, relying upon the familiarity of his readers with their Scriptures. See for example, in the same chapter, verse 11, and compare it with Ps. 72: 10, and Isa. 60: 6; and also verses 19 and 20, and compare them with Ex. 4: 19. His object in the early history of Christ, was not like that of Luke, to give connected historical facts, traced to their origin. Regarding the principal points of history as already known to his readers, he only adverted to them when they served to confirm Old Testament prophecies.¹

There are also two or three points of agreement between the narratives in Matthew and the prophecies of Balaam that are somewhat striking. The Magi as well as Balaam, according to the import of their names, μάγοι, were magicians or astrologers. It is said in Matt. 2: 1 that the μάγοι ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν παρεγένοντο, and in Num. 23: 7, "Balak hath brought me from Aram, the king of Moab from the mountains of the East." In Matthew 2: 2 the Magi say: "εἶδομεν αὐτοῦ τὸν ἀστέρα, which would seem to be naturally suggested by Balaam's exclamation: "I see him," "I behold him," "a star goeth forth," etc. So it was understood by Calovius: quem vidisse Bileam in posteris suis dici potest, nempe in magis ex oriente ad praeseppe domini perductis.

There seems to be an allusion to the passage in Numbers, in Apoc. 22: 16, in which Jesus is represented as saying: ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ῥίζα καὶ τὸ γένος Δαβὶδ, ὁ ἀστὴρ ὁ λαμπρὸς ὁ προϊός. A reference to the Old Testament in the designation of Christ by a star, seems more probable from the analogy of the rest of the verse, where in the phrase "root and offspring of David" there is a plain allusion to the prophecy of Isaiah. But nowhere in the Old Testament, if not in our passage, is the Messiah represented by the metaphor of a star.

There are two or three objections to this interpretation, which deserve a passing notice. It is said, first, that although in other prophecies the Messiah is represented as being a strict judge of his enemies, yet he is not so exclusively so as here. But such Psalms as ii. and cx. cannot be said to differ much in this respect from the prophecy of Balaam. They represent the Messiah as a king going forth for the conquest of his enemies. Besides, if

¹ See Hengstenberg's Christol. Vol. III. p. 232.

this were so, it is perfectly in accordance with the circumstances of Balaam. It was merely to curse the people that Balaam had been brought. He intimates at the beginning of this prophecy, that he has to do only with Israel and his enemies: "Come, I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days." Now it would have been out of place if he had given any other qualifications of this ruler, than he has given.

It is, also, said that this cannot refer to the Messiah, because at the time of the appearance of the Messiah, the Moabites had disappeared from among the children of men. But this objection, although at first view specious, seems to rest on a misconception of the spirit of the whole passage. The object of the passage is to make known what Israel shall do in the last days. His enemies are not confined to Moab. The specifications made in this and the subsequent verses of this prophecy are only a palpable illustration, to the persons concerned, of an idea which is general. The nations mentioned are only individual cases used as illustrations of the universal principle. As long as there are enemies of the church of God, there will be in an important sense Moabites. And certainly there was no want of such persons when the Messiah appeared, and it is to be feared that there will not be, until his mediatorial work shall have been accomplished.

It smiteth Moab on every side, וַיִּדְרֹךְ שָׁאֲרֵי מוֹאָב . שָׁאֲרֵי is the construct dual form of שָׂאֲרָה, mouth, face; and then, transferred to inanimate objects, the side. The Dual number is used because the two opposite sides of a region are naturally considered as in pairs. The LXX. render these words: *Θραύσει τοὺς ἀρχηγούς Moab*, he smiteth the *princes* of Moab. In the Vulgate, too, we find, for שָׁאֲרֵי, *duces*; in Onkelos, רִבְרֵבֵי, *principes*; and in Syriac, *ܩܝܘܿܬܝܿܐ*, *fortes* or *gigantes*. But there does not seem to be the least authority for giving these significations to שָׁאֲרֵי. The words שָׁאֲרֵי מוֹאָב here evidently designate the whole province of Moab, from one side to the other. Verschuir says: *percutere terminos regionis idem valet ac totam regionem qua late patet terminis suis inclusam*. So in Nehemiah 9: 22, Thou gavest them kingdoms and nations, and didst distribute them, לְשָׂאֲרָה; according to Michaelis: *distribuisti eos per omnes Cananaeae angulas*. Strictly and formally, the verbs וַיִּדְרֹךְ and וַיִּשְׁבֹּר refer only to the sceptre (שֵׁבֶט) as their subject, since the star cannot be said to break in pieces and destroy, but in sense they refer to both the

sceptre and the star, since they each designate the same object. The sceptre as an emblem of royalty had a double significance, that of a shepherd's staff and the rod of the task-master. The latter is the one here brought into view, as well as in Ps. 2: 9, "Thou shalt dash them in pieces with a rod [sceptre] of iron."

And destroyeth all the sons of tumult, וַיִּשְׁמַד כָּל-בְּנֵי-טוּמַלְטוּת. The meaning of *שָׁמַד* here is evident from its parallelism with *שָׁדַד*, as well as from Isa. 22: 5. It is probably a privative denominative, from *קיר*, wall, and hence signifies to dig down a wall, to destroy, after the analogy of *שָׁרַשׁ* (to root out, from *שָׁרֵשׁ*, root), *צָרַב*, *צָרַב*, *הִשָּׁח*, etc. In Jeremiah 48: 45, an evident imitation of our passage, *שָׁמַד* is used instead of *שָׁרַשׁ*, according to a prevailing practice of that prophet, to substitute similar words, for those found in the original which he imitates. See Küper, *Jeremias liborum sacrorum interpres atque vindex*, p. xiv and 43.

The sons of Sheth, בְּנֵי שֵׁט, has been very variously interpreted. In imitation of Onkelos who renders it: כָּל-בְּנֵי אָדָם, all the sons of men, some have supposed that it means the whole human race, as being the posterity of Seth the son of Adam. Not to delay to mention other explanations, *שֵׁט* seems most naturally to be contracted from *טוּמַלְטוּת*, Lam. 3: 47, (from *טוּמַלְטוּת*,) noise, tumult, like *טוּמַלְטוּת*; and *בְּנֵי שֵׁט* = sons of tumult, i. e. the Moabites. Verschuir says: designantur tumultuosi, irrequieti, quorum consuetudo est continuis incursionibus, certaminibus et vexationibus aliis creare molestiam. Qui titulus optime convenit in Moabitas, Ammonitas, Idumaeos aliosque populos vicinos, Israelitis semper molestos. This explanation is confirmed by Jeremiah, 48: 45, where *טוּמַלְטוּת* is substituted for *שֵׁט*; and by Amos 2: 2, where there seems to be an allusion to our passage. See *Authentic* I. S. 85.

Verse 18. From Moab, the seer turns to his southern neighbor Edom (*עֲדוּמָה*), and makes known the destruction which is to come upon it, from the star and the sceptre that is to go forth from Israel. This is the nation which the Israelites addressed as 'brother' in Num. 21: 14—21, and concerning whom they are commanded, when they pass through the coasts of their brethren, the children of Esau, not to meddle with them, for saith Jehovah: "I will not give you of their land, no not so much as a foot breadth, because I have given mount Seir unto Esau as a possession," etc. In Deut. 23: 7, it is also said: "thou shalt not abhor an Edomite for he is thy brother." There seems at first view to be a discrepancy between these passages and the one under consideration, where it is said that Edom is to be the possession of Israel. But the apparent

contradiction is removed, when we notice the second member, Seir, *his enemy*, שְׂעִיר אֹיְבֵי. The hostility which they had already begun to exhibit, Num. 20: 20, and which in a subsequent time became a bitter hatred, severed the bond which the Israelites were ordered to preserve inviolate. The commands to the Israelites were, to make no aggressions upon Edom, when they were passing by his country; but they were not required to refrain from repelling his unprovoked assaults. אֹיְבִים and שְׂעִיר are here parallel; the former being the name of the people, and the latter their country, as appears from Gen. 32: 3, "Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother, unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom." See Hengstenberg's *Authentie* II. S. 282. שְׂעִיר¹ is probably an appellative, meaning, shaggy, bristling, thus denoting the mountainous country of the Edomites, clothed with forests. The suffix of the word אֹיְבֵי, *his enemy*, probably relates to Israel, although many have referred it to Seir; and the phrase, שְׂעִיר אֹיְבֵי is like גֹּיִם צָרִים in verse 8th. The contrast with the following *stichos* seems to indicate this. Israel's enemies who would destroy him, go to destruction, whilst Israel himself, performeth valiant deeds. The parallel passages too, all indicate that the hostility has its origin in Edom; see for example, Amos 1: 11, 14.—The prophecy of the conquest of the Edomites, cannot be said to have had its complete fulfilment in the victories of David over them, 2 Sam. 8: 14. 1 Kings 11: 15, 16. 1 Chron. 18: 12, 13; because later prophets with manifest reference to this passage reiterate the threatening. Amos 9: 12, says: The Lord will raise up the fallen tabernacle of David, so that they may possess the remnant of Edom, לְמִצְוֵן יְהוָה אֶדְוִי אֶדְוִי אֶדְוִי. Compare also Obadiah, 18—21. Verschuir says of this passage: Obadiah domum Jacobi comparat cum igne, Josephi cum flamma, et Esavi cum stipula, quae ab igne et flamma, ita combureretur, ut non amplius esset קָרוֹן לְבֵית יְהוָה, quod eodem fere modo dixerat Bileam (Num. 24: 19): הָאֹיְבִי שְׂעִיר קָרוֹן לְבֵית יְהוָה. Deinde rursus, (v. 19): יְהוָה הִנְגֵּב אֶת־דָּוִד קָרוֹן. This allusion is the more unequivocal, since there is an undeniable reference to verse 21 (which see), in the 3rd and 4th verses of that prophecy. We are thus brought to a conclusion similar to that in the last verse, that it is not an individual king which is to prevail over Edom, but the kingdom of which the Messiah is the head.

¹ The Septuagint renders it 'Hsaü, and the whole phrase: 'Hsaü ó ἐχθρός αὐτοῦ.

Doeth valiantly, עָשָׂה חַיִּים. The phrase עָשָׂה חַיִּים is thought to have a double meaning in Hebrew, the one we have given, to perform valiant deeds, and also, to acquire wealth. The former only is suitable here. It is somewhat singular, that out of the eight times which it is used, aside from our passage, in three the action has reference to the same people, the Edomites, seeming to indicate that the later writers had the passage of the Pentateuch in mind when they wrote; see Ps. 60: 12. 108: 14. In 1 Sam. 14: 47, 48, this same phrase is used with precisely the same relation to three of the nations hostile to Israel; i. e. after Moab and Edom and before Amalek: See Hengstenberg, Gesch. Bil. S. 186, 7, for a defence of this and other references to the Pentateuch in the first Book of Samuel.

Verse 19. *And dominion shall go forth from Jacob*, וְנִרְדָּף מִיַּעֲקֹב. The use of the verb נִרְדָּף without any definite subject, may perhaps be accounted for from the fact that no one particular king is referred to, but the kingdom, the whole class of Israelitish kings. This word from the root נָדַד, to tread down, to break in pieces by treading, is well chosen to characterize the dominion to be acquired over a hostile nation.—*And shall destroy the remnant from the city*, וְהִצְתִּיר מִן־הָעִיר. הִצְתִּיר, from פָּרַד, to flee, to escape and hence meaning the one escaped, the remnant, is very seldom used in prose, but often in poetry. In respect to the meaning of the phrase, compare Num. 21: 35. Deut. 2: 34. 3: 3. In reference to the persons indicated by the remnant, Calvin says: nempe quoscunque reperiet deploratos hostes.

Verse 20. *And he looked toward Amalek*, וַיִּבְטֹא אֶל־עֲמָלֵק. The country of the Amalekites was south of the Plains of Moab and west of Edom, mentioned in the last verse, and between that country and Egypt. It is not necessary to suppose, and indeed it is not probable, that he saw them with his physical sight which according to verse 15 was obstructed, but in vision, as he saw the star and sceptre.

The first of the nations is Amalek, רֵאשִׁית בְּיָמֵי עֲמָלֵק. The signification of רֵאשִׁית from ראש, head, is without doubt here *the chief*, the most distinguished, of the nations (בְּיָמֵי). So the same phrase (with the addition of the article), is used in Amos 6: 1, which may be considered as a commentary upon the passage under consideration. רֵאשִׁית is also used with the same meaning in connection with other words; as in Amos 6: 6, רֵאשִׁית מְטִיבִים, the best of ointments, and in 1 Sam. 15: 21; see Henstenberg's Authentie, II. S. 304, for a confutation of other explanations of this phrase.

His end shall be for destruction, אָחֲרָיו יָדִי אָבֵד. The word אָחֲרָיו, *end*, seems to be here chosen for the sake of the contrast with רֵאשִׁית, in which the idea of beginning is implied. So the words are used in contrast in Deut. 11: 12, From the beginning of the year, מֵרֵשִׁית הַשָּׁנָה, even to the end, וְעַד אַחֲרֵיהֶן תֵּנֶה. The word אָחֲרָיו is used with the same signification in the formula: at the end of days, בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים. אָבֵד, a participial form, takes the abstract signification, *destruction*, Ewald, Gr. 127. 2. 6, instead of being, as usual, a *nomen agentis*, and the prep. יָדִי, *even to, for*, takes the form of the construct plural of nouns, in conformity with its original substantive character; see Stuart's Roediger, § 99. A strong contrast seems to be intended between the original condition of Amalek, as the chief of the nations, and its end which is utter ruin.

Verse 21. *The Kenites*, אֶת־הַחִיטִּי. There seem to be two distinct tribes which are designated in the Bible as Kenites. First, the posterity of Jethro, are so called, as in Judges 1: 16. 4: 11; but they are always spoken of as friendly to Israel and consequently cannot be here referred to. These may be termed the Midianitish Kenites. But, secondly, among the Canaanitish tribes, whose country was promised to the posterity of Abraham, Gen. 15: 19, as well as in other passages, a people bearing this name appear, who are without doubt the nation here meant.

Perpetual is thy habitation, אֶיְיָן מִיִּשְׁבְּךָ. The noun אֶיְיָן, literally, perpetuity, is from יָתָן, to be lasting, perpetual, and the meaning of the phrase in its connection seems to be: Although your dwelling has all the attributes of perpetuity, yet it shall be destroyed.—*And placed in a rock is thy nest*, וְיָשִׁים בְּסֵלֶע קִנְיָךְ. יָשִׁים seems most naturally to be considered as a passive participle; see Stuart's Roediger, § 72. 2. note 3. and Maurer's Commentary. Some, however, consider it as an infinitive used for a finite verb, as not unfrequently in Hebrew.—סֵלֶע, (from which the Latin, *silex* is perhaps derived,) signifies literally a high rock, hence a fortress upon a rock, as a place of security, a place of refuge, etc. It is also the name for the capital of the Idumeans, Petra, which was shut in by high rocks. This is an explanation of the perpetuity of the dwelling of the Kenites spoken of in the preceding *stichos*, and fitly characterizes their abodes among the Amalekites in the mountains south of the Plains of Moab. Thy nest, קִנְיָךְ, also enhances the idea of the security of this people, by bringing to mind the unapproachable cliffs sought out by the eagle as a place for her nest. The paro-

nomasia with the name קִינִי, קִינִי may also have been one reason for the choice of this metaphor. Compare the imitations of this passage in Jer. 49: 16 and Obad. verse 4.

Verse 22. *But*, כִּי אֵם. So these particles are frequently rendered after a negative as in Gen. 39: 9. 28: 17, and sometimes when not preceded by a negative as in Gen. 40: 14. See Stuart's *Roed.* † 152. 2. (i). But a negative may be considered as implied: Although thy dwelling be secure, there is *no* help for thee in its security; *but* Kain shall be *for* wasting, כִּי יִבָּזֵז. For the construction of this infinitive with *בְּ* see Stuart's *Roed.* † 139. 2.

Until, וְיָרֶדְךָ, literally, unto what? or until when?—*Assyria shall lead thee captive*, וְאֲשׁוּר יִקְרָבְךָ. Who is meant by *thee*, אֲתָּךְ here, Israel or the Kenites? Which of the two nations is to be carried captive by Asshur? A difficult question to answer; but probably Israel. For the Kenites are spoken of in the third person in the preceding *stichos*, and Israel is directly addressed at other times by Balaam, as in the beginning and end of the second prophecy. It may also be said that as destruction is spoken of in the previous verse, captivity does not make a very good climax with it. It is not altogether evident how a nation that is destroyed can be carried away captive. Besides it is more accordant with the whole spirit of the passage, to suppose that the captivity of Israel is incidentally alluded to here. The destruction of his enemies is the burden of this prophecy, and it was necessary to allude to the captivity of Israel in order to account for the introduction of the Assyrians as his enemies, who had not yet, like the Amalekites and Kenites, shown their hostility.

Verse 23. *Alas!* אֵיךְ, *who shall live*, וְיָרֶדְךָ. The view which last came before the seer fills him with anguish. It is not only a terrible destruction, but it is to come upon the "sons of his own people," 22: 5; and he who vainly hoped to curse Israel, is compelled to announce it. Hengstenberg compares this phrase with Matt. 24: 21, 22: "Ἔσται γὰρ τότε θλίψις μεγάλη, οἷα οὐ γέγονεν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς κόσμου, ἕως τοῦ νῦν, οὐδ' οὐ μὴ γένηται. Καὶ εἰ μὴ ἐκολοβώθησαν αἱ ἡμέραι ἐκεῖναι, οὐκ ἂν ἐσώθη πᾶσα σὰρξ· διὰ δὲ τοὺς ἐλεγκτοὺς κολοβωθήσονται αἱ ἡμέραι ἐκεῖναι."

When God doeth this, כִּי יַעֲשֶׂה אֱלֹהִים, or as the phrase may be rendered: since God doeth this. The suffix *י* appended to עֲשֶׂה refers to what follows, a usage not unfrequent in Hebrew. See note upon verse 17. Some consider it as referring to God, and כִּי as an abbreviated form of the demonstrative pronoun הַכִּי. But then כִּי should have the article, as always elsewhere, except

in Chron. 20: 9; where, as the author did not take it from the living language but from the Pentateuch, he evidently erred in its use; See Henstenberg's *Gesch. Bil.* S. 148, and Stuart's *Ruediger*, † 34.

Verse 24. *And ships shall come from Chittim*, יָבִיאוּ סִפִּי מִצִּיִּים. יָבִיאוּ, a plural from יָבֵא for יָבִי from the root יָבַע, designates ships as being set up, built. See Isa. 33: 21, and Daniel 11: 30.—יָבִיאוּ literally means, from the hand, from the direction of.—יָבִיאוּ is generally acknowledged to have been derived from an ancient city founded by the Phenicians in Cyprus, and called Citium, *Kitios*. By the Hebrews it was used to designate the whole of Cyprus and sometimes in later times in a wider acceptation for the coasts and islands of Greece, and even Italy. Josephus in his *Antiquities*, I. 6. 1: *Κόπρος αὐτὴ νῦν καλεῖται καὶ ἀπ' αὐτῆς νη-σοὶ τε πᾶσαι καὶ τὰ πλείους τῶν παρὰ θάλασσαν, Χεθίμ ἐπὶ Ἑβραίων ὀνομάζονται.* It is not necessary to suppose that it means anything more than Cyprus here. This island formed a principal station for the Phenician ships towards the west, Tuch's *Gen.* S. 215; and ships coming from the western countries would naturally take the direction of this middle station, between Europe and Asia. Without doubt the declaration in this verse is, that people from the west, either Greeks or Romans, shall come and subdue the Assyrians. When we inquire for the time and manner of its fulfilment, we are naturally and unavoidably reminded of the expedition of Alexander. Even the neological critics are unable to deny that it may have reference to him. De Wette in his "*Beiträgen zur Einl. in's A. T.*" II. S. 364, and Vater in his "*Kommentar zum Pentateuch*," tell us, indeed, that the passage is obscure and does not necessarily refer to the Macedonians; but they wisely hesitate to point out any other reference. Others, as Bertholdt, *Einl.* III. 790, arbitrarily attempt to avoid the conclusion that there is a prophecy here, by the supposition of an interpolation. But by a reference to Jeremiah 48: 45 it is shown, as it may subsequently appear, that it was extant in his time, and consequently in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, and therefore long enough before the time of Alexander, to preclude the possibility of a prophecy *post eventum*. It would certainly be improbable even if we allow only a general reference in the passage, that the thought that Greeks should come in ships and subjugate Assyria, should ever enter the mind of a Jew of the time of the later prophets. Indeed even De Wette is compelled to confess, that we seem to

be obliged to understand verses 23 and 24 as in a sense really prophetic, Einl. 2nd ed. S. 229.

There is one more argument in favor of a specific reference to the expedition of Alexander, which deserves a brief notice. In Maccabees 1: 1 it is said of Alexander: ὁ ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ τῆς γῆς Χερτυίμ, καὶ ἐπάταξε τὸν Λαρεῖον βασιλεία Περσῶν καὶ Μήδων. There seems to be an allusion here to the prophecy of Balaam, as having found its fulfilment. For in addition to other reasons from the internal character of the book, (see Hengstenberg, Gesch. Bil. S. 202,) the author uses the form of the word *Χερτυίμ*, corresponding to the Hebrew, whilst in 8: 5 where he has no reference to this passage, we find *Κιτιέων βασιλεύς*, according to the current usage of his time.

And shall subdue Asshur, and subjugate Eber, עֲבָרָא וְאַשּׁוּרָא וְעַבְרָא. Eber, עֲבָרָא has frequently been explained as here meaning the Hebrews. So the LXX: καὶ κακώσουσιν Ἀσσοῦρ καὶ κακώσουσιν Ἑβραίους; and the Vulgate: Venient in triebus de Italia, superabunt Assyrios vastabuntque Hebraeos. But a much more probable explanation is, that it is a designation of those who dwell beyond the Euphrates, from עָבַר, to pass over. See Rosenmüller upon the passage, and Hengstenberg's Gesch. Bil. S. 206 sq. Asshur and Eber do not seem, then, to designate two different regions, but stand in the relation to each other of general and particular. They shall subdue Asshur, and subjugate the country beyond the Euphrates, which includes Asshur. This explanation is in accordance with Gen. 10: 21, where Shem is designated as the father of all the sons of Eber, among whom Asshur is named. The Assyrians beyond the Euphrates, are also mentioned in connection with the inhabitants of the region, in Isa. 7: 20, "In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired, namely, by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria."

And even he shall be destroyed, וְגַם-חַיִּים עֲבָרָא. It is impossible to decide positively whether חַיִּים here refers to עַבְרָא, the people that shall come from the west, or to Asshur and Eber, (see Rosenmüller's and Maurer's Comm.,) but it probably relates to the latter. This explanation seems to accord better with the spirit of the prophecy; as we can see no reason why the destruction of this nation from the west should be foretold here, as they are not represented as the enemies of Israel, but only as the instrument in the hands of God in punishing his enemies. For an explanation of עֲבָרָא, see note on verse 20 above.

The Fate of Balaam.

At the close of the prophecies of Balaam, chap. 24: 25, the historian says of him simply, that he "rose up and went and returned to his place," and adds: "Balak also went his way." Some have supposed that by "his place" here, the place of the punishment of the wicked is to be understood, and compare this passage with Acts 1: 25, where it is said of Judas, that he fell from his apostleship "that he might go to his own place." But verses 11th and 14th of the same chapter are a sufficient confutation of this interpretation; for after Balak, despairing of accomplishing his designs through Balaam, and angry at the blessings pronounced upon his enemies, says to him: "now flee thou to thy place." Balaam answers as if complying with his command: "now behold I go to *my people*." And, besides, the addition of the declaration, corresponding to "Balaam rose up and went and returned to his place," that "Balak *also* went his way," is decisive; for no one can suppose that, in the case of Balak, "his way," is specifically the way to destruction.

Others suppose that the historian intends to represent Balaam as returning directly to Mesopotamia. And some find in this representation a direct contradiction to other passages, where he appears as giving counsel to the Midianites for the corruption of the Israelites, and as a just retribution, is slain by the latter in the war of vengeance which they undertake for the punishment of their enemies. But this seems to be making much more of the passage than its author intended. It is true, that we may avoid all contradiction between these passages, by supposing that the seer after his return home, dissatisfied with the result of his first mission, goes again to the aid of his former employers, and while he is laboring to accomplish by indirect measures, the object for which he was called, works his own certain destruction. And as it is not the object of Moses to write a Life of Balaam, it is not strange that we have no definite account of these passages in it. Yet, although this hypothesis would be sufficient to account for the apparent discrepancy in the narrative of the Biblical Historian, we are not compelled to resort to it.

The word, *שָׁב*, rendered *returned* here, is from *שָׁב*, meaning, literally, to turn about, to turn back, and does not in itself designate the attainment of the limit of return; see Gesenius's Lexicon. So that it is not necessary even to give the word an inchoative sense, which is not infrequent in verbs, but merely, its most nat-

ural and obvious meaning. In Num. 14: 40, we have a parallel construction of the words לָלוּ to go up, followed by $\text{לְיַרְאֵשׁ-הַרְרָה}$, to, toward, the top of the mountain; where in the verses following, it appears that they only partly ascended, since the Amalekites and the Canaanites "came down" and "smote them." But, it may be asked, does not the addition of לְבֵקְטָן , to, (toward) his place, designate the attainment of the goal of the return? Certainly not more than the לְיַרְאֵשׁ in the other passage decides that the Israelites attained the top of the mountain, for לְ and לְבֵקְטָן are only different modifications of the same preposition, and both denote motion or direction to, towards an object, whether that object is attained or not. But one more parallel passage in respect to language, may be briefly adverted to. In Gen. 18: 33, after it is said, that the "Lord went his way as soon as he had left communing with Abraham, it is added: and Abraham returned to his place, $\text{שָׁבַב לְבֵקְטָנוֹ}$. The same words (i. e. from the same root), it will be noticed, are used here in precisely the same relative construction as in the passage under consideration, and in both cases the parallel phrase indicates that not the limit, but only the direction of the return is brought into view. It is granted that if Moses were writing a history of Balaam, we should infer that he did actually reach his home, unless something to the contrary was said. But the whole end of the introduction of Balaam in this place, is accomplished, when it is made known, that he left Balak with blessing for Israel upon his lips instead of cursing. The favor of God toward Israel in turning the devices of his enemy against him, into blessings, is all that the object of the historian requires (see Dent. 23: 4, 6), and that is accomplished when the soothsayer and his employer are separated. The fate of Balaam is afterwards merely incidentally alluded to. And to this we will now direct our attention, and see what traces of his subsequent course can be found.

In Num. 31: 8, after enumerating the kings of Midian who were slain in the war, undertaken in accordance with the command of God, to "avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites," it is said: "Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword." In the same chapter, 16th verse, to account for Moses' wrath, because the women of Midian were preserved alive in this war, the historian says: "Behold these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Beor." In 2 Pet. 2: 15, after declaring in regard to those guilty of certain species of wickedness, that

they had forsaken the right way, and gone astray, it is added: "following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;" thus not only characterizing the sin which Balaam enticed Israel to commit, which is more definitely explained in Num. 25: 1—3, but also recognizing the cause which impelled him to the commission of it: "who loved the wages of unrighteousness." The fate of Balaam is also mentioned in Josh. 13: 22; "Balaam also, the son of Beor, the soothsayer, did the children of Israel slay with the sword among them that were slain by them;" and his crime is also referred to in Rev. 2: 14; "Balaam who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols and to commit fornication." Compare also Jude, verse 13.

We have then, as it should seem, no definite information in reference to Balaam after he left Balak, until he appeared again among the Midianites and taught them the means of seducing the Israelites. But we can at least give a probable account of his course after his last prophecy. His ambition and love of gain, which had failed of their gratification from the Moabites, would naturally lead him to go to the camp of the Israelites, upon whose gratitude for his past service in blessing them, although unwillingly, he would naturally have high expectations. The supposition that Balaam did visit the Israelitish camp, which accords so well with his character, receives strong support from another quarter. The contents of chapters xxii—xxiv of Numbers could hardly have been derived from any other source, than the communications made by Balaam himself to the leaders of the Israelites. For, while the language and style of them, is such as to preclude the probability, if not the possibility, of their composition by any other than an Israelite, and indeed by any other than the author of the history in connection with which they are found,¹ the necessary information could scarcely have been obtained from either the Moabites or Midianites.²

¹ In proof of this, see Hengstenberg, *Authentic I. S.* 404 sq., and *Gesch. Bil. S.* 215, 16.

² The only objection to this visit of Balaam to the Israelites, is in the fact that it is nowhere mentioned by the author of the Pentateuch. But this circumstance can have but little weight with any one who is familiar with the historical character of the Pentateuch. Particulars which would be of general interest, and which we should perhaps be especially interested to know, if they have no immediate connection with the design of the writer, are often omitted. Many parallel cases might be cited. In Ex. 4: 20, it is said that Moses, when he returned to Egypt, took his wife and children with him; for this was ne-

But Balaam, we may suppose, met a very different reception from the leader of Israel from what he had expected. Moses, who penetrated his heart, (as who that knew under what circumstances he went to visit Moab would not?) saw that he had gone there in accordance with his own selfish desires, and had blessed Israel only because "the Lord would not hear him."¹ He accordingly gave the seer a cold reception, unaccompanied by profers of honor or emolument. Balaam was thus naturally reminded, in contrast, of the promise of Balak: "I will promote thee to very great honor, and do whatsoever thou sayest unto me." But it should seem that he did not venture to return to the king of the Moabites, whom he had so much offended, but had recourse to the Midianitish women, to whom he gave counsel in reference to the best means of contaminating Israel, and thus making them unworthy of the blessing of God.² This expedient for attacking the Israelites in their only vulnerable point, aside from the testimony of the historian in Numbers xxxi, reveals its own authorship. No other than the crafty Mesopotamian, who under the pretence of obedience to God, thought only of ministering to his own evil desires, and who knew of the relation subsisting between Israel and their great leader, could have originated it. But the designs of the wicked, although they may prosper for a time, will ere long come to nought. They themselves will fall into the pit which their own hand hath digged, and their foot be taken in the snare which they have laid for another. The Israelites were commanded to avenge themselves upon their seducers, and they slew them even to the women, who had especially been the means of their sin. Their guide in wickedness was also found among the slain: "And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain, namely, Evi and

cessary in order to explain verses 25 and 26 following. But the circumstance that they were sent back to her father is only incidentally alluded to afterwards in 18: 2.—The grave of Deborah, the nurse of Rebecca, is particularly designated in 35: 8, but not a trace of her early history can be found. Hengstenberg, *Gesch. Bil. S.* 218, 19.

¹ Deut. 23: 6.

² That it was the women of the *Midianites* who acted the most conspicuous part in this matter, is evident from the manner in which they are mentioned in Num. 25: 6, 15, and in 31: 16, as well as from the circumstance that the war which the Israelites undertook, to avenge themselves, was against Midian and not against Moab. Where the Moabites are mentioned in relation to this temptation of Israel, it is only as the more powerful of two nations, considered as combined together. Hengstenberg, *Gesch. Bil. S.* 219.

Rekem and Zur and Hur and Reba, five kings of Midian; Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword."

The Character of Balaam as a Prophet.

A brief view of the character of Balaam as a prophet, may not be entirely out of place here, although it renders necessary a brief recapitulation of some things, already either stated or implied. Two extreme views have prevailed in regard to him. Some have considered him to have been at first a good and pious man and a true prophet, who was subsequently led astray by his worldly disposition. Others suppose that he had no connection with true religion, but was a mere heathen magician, who as truly as the animal on which he rode, was used by Jehovah in the communication of his blessing upon Israel and his consequent curse upon the "nations his enemies." But neither of these extreme views seems to be entirely correct.

In the first place, he never was in the full sense a true prophet of Jehovah: 1. He is called in Joshua 13: 22, *the diviner*, *חֹזֵן*, which appears never to be used of a true prophet, but only of diviners, magicians, etc. And this name seems to have still more significance when we read in Num. 22: 7, that the messengers went to him with the rewards of divination in their hands, implying that he was accustomed to practice magical arts for pay. 2. The circumstances attending his declarations are entirely dissimilar to those of the Hebrew prophets. The erecting of the altars, the slaying of victims, and the going aside to receive his message, saying *perhaps* (*יָמָא*) Jehovah may come to meet me, savors too much of heathen rites, or at least indicates a far lower order of the prophetic character than that exhibited by such prophets as Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. They had all the knowledge and foresight necessary to keep them from error, whilst Balaam was only endowed with a specific gift of prophecy: "nec perpetuum vaticinandi munus ei impositum." God made a revelation to him in reference to a particular event or revealed to him a specific purpose, and then left him to his chosen way. What he communicated he received directly and immediately from God; nothing was trusted to him. But those who were in the full sense prophets, spoke whenever occasion demanded, from an overflowing and bursting heart the words of infallible truth. They cannot but speak, wo is unto them if they give not their testimony against evil doers and do not proclaim the judge-

ment of God which will come upon the enemies of truth. In them emotion, command, exhortation, gushes forth as from a pure and perennial fountain, but Balaam is compelled to solicit the messengers to tarry over night, in order to receive his orders, he must retire from the altar to meet God alone. 3. His conduct when the messengers from Balak made their request of him, is decisive against his being a really good man. It seems evident from the frequent allusions in his prophecies to the promises to the patriarchs, that he was aware that this people which had come out of Egypt were the chosen people of God, and yet he does not dismiss the messengers at once, as he would have done if he had been desirous only of doing right. 4. The manner in which he is treated by Jehovah indicates that he was not a true prophet. God's anger with him for going with the messengers after permission had been granted him, cannot be accounted for, on the supposition that he was governed by correct principle. It would appear arbitrary in the extreme, but for the implied anxiety of Balaam to comply with the request of Balak, and receive the rewards of his labor. 5. The declaration in Deut. 23: 4, 5, plainly indicates the real character of Balaam: "They hired against thee Balaam, . . . to curse thee. Nevertheless the Lord thy God *would not hearken* to Balaam, but the Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the Lord thy God loved thee." According to this passage, he was *hired* against Israel, and was only restrained from pronouncing curses, by the love of God to Israel, which prevented him from hearkening to Balaam.

In the second place, Balaam was not entirely destitute of the fear of God: 1. His conduct when the messengers arrived in delaying them, in order that he might receive the commands of Jehovah, and in refusing to comply with their request, when the promise of great wealth and honor was made to him, by the asseveration that he could not do, little or great, anything, contrary to the command of God, as really imply this, as his delaying to give an immediate refusal, indicates his desire to go with them. 2. But there is positive proof that God did speak through Balaam. In the first place, the incorporation of his sayings into the books that contain the ground principles of a revealed religion, rests upon the fact, that they are really the word of God. As mere independent poetical productions, they would have no religious interest. Besides, as they are introduced as the words of God: "And the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth", 22: 5, "and the Spirit of God came upon him," there would be a deception used

by the writer, if they were the product of a mere natural enthusiasm. Entirely in accordance with this view, is the declaration in Deut. 23: 8, previously quoted to show that he was not a mere heathen soothsayer: "But the Lord thy God *turned* the curse into a blessing, because the Lord thy God loved thee." 3. There are many things in the prophecies themselves, which cannot be satisfactorily explained, if Balaam was a mere heathen soothsayer. The knowledge that he exhibits in regard to the earlier prophecies concerning Israel, is based upon at least some degree of interest in regard to them. The specific predictions which are found, especially in 24: 24, are conclusive evidence for their divine inspiration. The strong and positive declarations in reference to the future prosperity of Israel in 24: 7 and 17—19 are scarcely less convincing. But the proof of divine aid in uttering these oracles is not limited to specific predictions; it is grounded upon their whole contents and spirit of them. It is true that many of the declarations are based upon previous prophecies, especially upon those which relate to the choosing, and to the future blessedness of Israel, in comparison with Edom, recorded in Gen. 27: 29, 40, and those which make known the destruction of Amalek in Ex. 17: 14. Yet the living energy and authority with which they are uttered, are, considering the circumstances, a convincing indication that "the spirit of God came upon him." Now if it be true, that Balaam foretold future events, and that his declarations bear infallible marks of divine coöperation, it necessarily follows, that he was not a mere heathen soothsayer. Without some love of the truth, without at least a partial going forth of the mind after it, and willingness on the part of the subject, the operation of the spirit of God is not supposable, at least it does not seem to be consistent with the principles implanted in the human breast, and without which, man would not be man. The necessity, the constraint, which Balaam is under, cannot be a physical, but a moral one. This is plainly implied in 23: 12: "Must I not *take heed* to speak that which the Lord hath put into my mouth?" 4. Balaam himself, *after* the spirit of God came upon him, 24: 2, according to the declaration of the author of the narrative, not only was conscious of the fact, that he was then under divine guidance, but uses designations of himself, which indicate his belief in a permanent participation in the divine revelations, 24: 3, 4, 15, 16.

If, then, the extreme views, which represent Balaam either as a true prophet or as entirely destitute of the knowledge and fear

of God, are not correct; it follows that a medium between the two must be the only just estimate of his character. He without doubt in the beginning had some knowledge and fear of God. When, after hearing of the wonders which the God of Israel had wrought, he ranked himself as his prophet, he seems to have used the means in his power for attaining knowledge of his revelations of himself, both in his works and word. In this way he hoped to gain possession of the wonder-working power which this new race of men seemed to him to have derived from their God. The hope of gain it should seem, at first led him to discard the gods of his own country, and to adopt that of a strange people. But his study of the character of that deity would naturally exert an influence upon him, and excite interest in his mind. And it is not too much to suppose, when we take into view his conduct, as well as the fame that had gone abroad in regard to him, that God vouchsafed to him peculiar revelations of himself and of his plans, and perhaps gave visible manifestations of his power through Balaam's instrumentality. But he yielded not his undivided affections to God, but still clung to the idols of his heart, wealth and honor; and hence that which might have proved his salvation, only wrought out for him a more signal destruction. Thus God makes use of wicked men to accomplish his purposes.

We find some individuals similar to Balaam, in the New Testament. Simon Magus, as it is said in Acts 13: 13, "believed and was baptized, and wondered at beholding the miracles and signs which were done." But it afterwards appears why he had thus sought the intercourse of the apostles, interested himself in their doctrines, and even *believed*. He coveted the power of miraculous gifts which they possessed, and even offered money for its attainment. But Peter, whose eyes were opened, after this request, to discern his real character said: "Thy money perish with thee." "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God."—Those, too, who according to Luke 9: 49, cast out devils in the name of Christ, without being in the company of his disciples, are fit followers of their prototype whose history is recorded in the Old Testament.¹

¹ For parallel cases in the history of Missions, see Hengstenberg's *Gesch. Bil. S. 16, 17.*

Antiquity and Credibility of the History of Balaam.

With the arguments for the Mosaic origin of the Pentateuch in general, we have at present no concern. Recent investigations have placed it on an immovable basis. The monuments of Egypt were not constructed in vain. Ages long past lift up their voices in defence of the truth, and even its avowed enemies cannot gainsay or resist their testimony. But the particular passage with which we are at present concerned, has been the object of many and various attacks. The strangeness of many things in the narration, have been considered by some a sufficient reason for rejecting the whole account as a *mythos*, wholly unworthy of credence. Others think that they find sufficient internal evidence to place the authorship of the passage in an age long subsequent to that of Moses. Still others, while they acknowledge the authenticity of the narrative as a whole, or perhaps attribute it to the time of Saul, set down verses 22—24 of the twenty-fourth chapter as a *vaticinium post eventum*, belonging to the time of the Assyrian empire. The entire want of agreement among those who deny the Mosaic origin of this narrative, makes it evident, that they cannot at least have very tangible and positive grounds, on which to base their hypotheses. The fact is, they can find no rest for the sole of the foot, out of the Mosaic age. But it is not our intention, nor is it deemed necessary, to examine all of the theories that have been broached in reference to this matter. Most of those which have not been already, will perhaps be sufficiently confuted by a brief statement of some of the positive grounds for a Mosaic origin.

In the first place, we derive an argument for the authenticity of the passage under consideration, from references to it in subsequent books of the sacred canon: 1. The existence and authority of the prophecies of Balaam in the time of the Prophet Jeremiah are indisputable, from the comparison of chap. 48: 45 of his prophecy with Num. 24: 17. Jeremiah often refers to previous prophecies, and adopts them into his own. But the allusion is here peculiar. In the place of two uncommon and difficult words, Jeremiah uses two that are more usual, and whose meaning is more obvious. In Numbers we find this phrase: *וַיִּקְרָא בְנֵי-מִדְיָן*. but in Jeremiah, instead of it, the following: *וַיִּקְרָא בְנֵי-טְאוּן*. Now it cannot be supposed that *קְרָא* originally stood in Jeremiah, for *קְרָא* is evidently chosen with reference to *טְאוּן*; but we may suppose that, according to a very common usage with him,

the later prophet substituted a similar sounding word for the one found in the passage which he imitated. שָׂאוֹן is plainly a translation of שָׂוֹן . 2. In Habakkuk 1: 13 there seems to be an allusion to Numbers 23: 20. A simple comparison of the Hebrew is all that is necessary to show the similarity of the passages. In the third verse the words are: $\text{לָמָּה הִרְאִי אֵלַי וְקָסַל תַּגִּיד$, "Why dost thou show me iniquity and cause me to behold grievance?" It will be noticed, that the principal words are all from the same roots with those in Num. 23: 21. The nouns אֵלַי and קָסַל are identical in the two passages, and הִרְאִי and תַּגִּיד in Habakkuk, answer to הִרְאִי and תַּגִּיד in Numbers; compare also verse 13, and see Hengstenberg's *Gesch. Bil.* S. 112. 3. A more distinct recognition of the existence of the prophecies of Balaam, is found in Micah 6: 5, "O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord." Even Tuch argues, that this passage implies a knowledge of the prophecies of Balaam. And further, the manner in which they are referred to, indicates that they were considered as the word of God. Otherwise their quotation would have no influence upon the people, and could not certainly be represented as teaching the "righteousness of the Lord," $\text{בְּדַקְדוּק הַדָּוָה}$. 4. Obadiah also seems to allude to Num. 24: 21: "placed in a rock is thy nest," etc., in verses 3d and 4th of his prophecy: "thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high," . . . "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." Compare also verses 17—19 of Obadiah with Num. 24: 18, 19, and see note on those verses, p. 725 above.—A similar, though less distinct reference is found in Amos 9: 12, and 6: 1.

5. We can go still farther back than the earliest of the prophets, in our proof of the existence and authority of Num. 22: 24. The similarity of language in Prov. 30: 1, and in the last words of David, 2 Sam. 23: 1, seems to be sufficient to show, that the prophecies of Balaam were not only in existence, but acknowledged as divine, and consequently of Mosaic origin. A comparison of the Hebrew shows that the last is an accurate copy from the Pentateuch, with the exception of the old form בְּנִי , which is supplied by the usual form of the construct, בְּנֵי .

Num. 24: 3, and 16.

$\text{נֶאֱמַר בְּלִבְכֶם בְּנֵי בְעֹר}$
 $\text{וְנֶאֱמַר יַעֲבֹר שְׂתָרֵם הַדְּבִיר}$

2 Sam. 23: 1.

$\text{נֶאֱמַר הִדֹּר בְּיַד־שֵׁשׁ}$
 $\text{וְנֶאֱמַר יַעֲבֹר יַחֲסֹם עַל}$

In Ps. 60: 14, 108: 14, and 1 Sam. 14: 47, 48, we find a striking similarity in the Hebrew phraseology, to Num. 24: 18, and in 1 Sam. 15: 29, to Num. 23: 19. Finally in Judges 11: 25 there is a plain implication of the facts recorded in Num. 22: sq. "Now art thou anything better than Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab? Did he ever strive against Israel?" etc. The examination of the antiquity of the prophecies of Balaam might be left with this incidental testimony of subsequent inspired writers; but it may not be amiss to glance at some of the internal evidences of their origin in the time of Moses.

The use of י as a suffix in נָי Num. 23: 18, 24: 3 and 15, and of שָׁמַיִם for the later and smoother forms, שָׁמַיִם and שָׁמַיִם, have already been noticed in remarks upon the verses in which they occur. The designation of the country on the east side of Jordan opposite Jericho as the "Plains of Moab," עֲרֵבוֹת מוֹאָב, is indicative of the time of the composition of our passage. This designation is found out of the Pentateuch only in Josh. 13: 32, and there with reference to the narrative in the Pentateuch. So אֶרֶץ מוֹאָב, the land of Moab, is used for this region only by the author of the Pentateuch. This usage in the age of Moses, and its subsequent neglect, are entirely in accordance with the circumstances of the time. It will be remembered, that this country, when the Israelites arrived in that region, had just been wrested from Moab. The remembrance of its previous possessors, for a time after their subjugation by the Amorites, was natural; but the fact of their possession would in process of time be obliterated, or at least lose its significance and consequently cease to be designated. Accordingly we find in Judges 11: 12 sq., that the same country is called the Land of the Amorites.—The word Jericho is written יֵרִיחוֹ, in the Pentateuch; and so it occurs in Num. 22: 1, but is subsequently, except once, in 2 Sam. 10: 5, written יֵרִיחוֹ, until after the exile, when the original form is again resumed. This would seem to indicate that Num. xxii. sq. did not belong at least to the middle ages of Hebrew Literature.

There are several particulars which form the basis of the narrative respecting Balaam, which belong only to the Mosaic age. The enemies of Israel whose destruction is threatened in 24: 17—21, are the very nations which had shown themselves hostile at the close of the wanderings of the Israelites. First, the Moabites who dwelt eastward of the Plains of Moab are mentioned. Then, the more eastern of their southern enemies, the Edomites, and next the more western, the Amalekites and Kenites. These tribes

were not only hostile, but they seem to comprise all who had at the time shown themselves as hostile. But this could not have been said in any later age. In the time of Saul and David, the relations of the Israelites to the surrounding nations, were materially changed. In 1 Sam. 14: 47, 8 we have a summary of the tribes with which the Israelites were then at enmity: "So Saul . . . fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the king of Zobah, and against the Philistines; and whithersoever he turned himself he vexed them." It seems from this passage that the Philistines at the close of the period of the Judges of Israel, had become their most powerful enemies. The thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of 1 Samuel are wholly taken up with an account of the struggles of Saul with them. "And there was sore war against the Philistines" not only during "all the days of Saul," but the beginning of David's reign, was signalized by a victory over this same nation, 2 Sam. 5: 17 sq. An examination of the history of the subsequent wars of David, shows, that the enemies enumerated in Num. 24: 17 sq. acted but a subordinate part. The great struggle was with the Aramaean nations,¹ and the Ammonites. The designation of Amalek as the chief of the nations, is as appropriate in the age of Moses as it would be inapposite in any subsequent age.² So Calvin accounts for the mention made of Amalek by saying: quia tunc celeberrimae erant eorum opes; and Le Clerc also says: oportuisse Hamalekitarum res eo tempore floruisse, quandoquidem quasi eximium quid Israelitarum rex major Hamalekitarum rege futurus dicitur.

Several other particulars might be dwelt upon as indicating the Mosaic origin of our passage, such as the mingling of heathen and Israelitish religious rites and practices, differences between the oracles of Balaam and subsequent prophecies, accuracy of geographical details in regard to that period, and an incidental allusion to the arrangement of the Israelites in their passage through the wilderness; but we hasten to notice in conclusion, the proof of authenticity, from the actual declaration of future events that we find in 24: 24. That there is a manifest foresight of what will happen in a subsequent age, cannot, we think, be denied. And the declaration that a power shall come from the west and subjugate the Babylonians, is as really beyond the bounds of merely human knowledge or foresight, when made in the time of Saul or David or even of the Assyrian dominion, as in the age of Moses.

¹ See 2 Sam. 8: 3 seq. 10: 6 sq. 12: 26 sq.

² See Exodus xvii.

But if there is real prophecy here, we need no further proof of its authenticity. For we cannot suppose that God would vouchsafe his prophetic spirit to one in a later age, who was endeavoring to palm himself off upon the world, as a contemporary with Moses. This would be to give countenance to deception, and at least to approve of evil for the sake of a good result. Not so have we understood the character of him who is "not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should repent."

ARTICLE V.

ON FULFILLING THE MINISTRY.

By Rev. N. Adams, Boston, Mass.

As we look back on those who in different generations and ages of the world have constituted the ministry of the true religion, we are struck with two things which preëminently characterize them. One is, that those of them who have fulfilled their ministry, have been *earnest men*. If we may speak of Moses as a minister of Israel, we have in him, a powerful example of earnestness. The faithful prophets were eminently earnest men; it is like the sudden sound of a trumpet to meet the name of Elijah, Samuel and Daniel; while the lives and sufferings, or the unequalled utterances of the other men of God in the Old Testament, and the histories of the Apostles, make this great impression on the mind, that each of them had his special work to do; and how was he straitened till it was accomplished! The tide that was set in motion by the Apostles, imparted its vigor to the early Christian fathers, till it lost itself in the great sea of human philosophy, and became for a time only one of the cross currents in the ocean of human thought. But see the Reformers of the sixteenth century, French, German and English, of any one of whom, Satan might have started and said, as Herod did of Christ, "It is John the Baptist whom I beheaded." The English Puritans were earnest men; the fathers of New England were baptized with fire. Wherever we find a ministry exerting a decided influence upon their generation, we find men of strong impulses, consecrating themselves wholly to their work.

With this earnestness we notice another peculiarity in them. The thoughts and labors of a faithful and able ministry are always