

LUTHER'S WORKS

VOLUME 16

LECTURES ON ISAIAH

Chapters 1—39

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General Introduction

THE first editions of Luther's collected works appeared in the sixteenth century, and so did the first efforts to make him "speak English." In America serious attempts in these directions were made for the first time in the nineteenth century. The Saint Louis edition of Luther was the first endeavor on American soil to publish a collected edition of his works, and the Henkel Press in Newmarket, Virginia, was the first to publish some of Luther's writings in an English translation. During the first decade of the twentieth century, J. N. Lenker produced translations of Luther's sermons and commentaries in thirteen volumes. A few years later the first of the six volumes in the Philadelphia (or Holman) edition of the *Works of Martin Luther* appeared. Miscellaneous other works were published at one time or another. But a growing recognition of the need for more of Luther's works in English has resulted in this American edition of Luther's works.

The edition is intended primarily for the reader whose knowledge of late medieval Latin and sixteenth-century German is too small to permit him to work with Luther in the original languages. Those who can, will continue to read Luther in his original words as these have been assembled in the monumental Weimar edition (*D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*; Weimar, 1883 ff.). Its texts and helps have formed a basis for this edition, though in certain places we have felt constrained to depart from its readings and findings. We have tried throughout to translate Luther as he thought translating should be done. That is, we have striven for faithfulness on the basis of the best lexicographical materials available. But where literal accuracy and clarity have conflicted, it is clarity that we have preferred, so that sometimes paraphrase seemed more faithful than literal fidelity. We have proceeded in a similar way in the matter of Bible versions, translating Luther's translations. Where this could be done by the use of an existing English version — King James, Douay, or Revised Standard — we have done so. Where

it could not, we have supplied our own. To indicate this in each specific instance would have been pedantic; to adopt a uniform procedure would have been artificial — especially in view of Luther's own inconsistency in this regard. In each volume the translator will be responsible primarily for matters of text and language, while the responsibility of the editor will extend principally to the historical and theological matters reflected in the introductions and notes.

Although the edition as planned will include fifty-five volumes, Luther's writings are not being translated in their entirety. Nor should they be. As he was the first to insist, much of what he wrote and said was not that important. Thus the edition is a selection of works that have proved their importance for the faith, life, and history of the Christian Church. The first thirty volumes contain Luther's expositions of various Biblical books, while the remaining volumes include what are usually called his "Reformation writings" and other occasional pieces. The final volume of the set will be an index volume; in addition to an index of quotations, proper names, and topics, and a list of corrections and changes, it will contain a glossary of many of the technical terms that recur in Luther's works and that cannot be defined each time they appear. Obviously Luther cannot be forced into any neat set of rubrics. He can provide his reader with bits of autobiography or with political observations as he expounds a psalm, and he can speak tenderly about the meaning of the faith in the midst of polemics against his opponents. It is the hope of publishers, editors, and translators that through this edition the message of Luther's faith will speak more clearly to the modern church.

J. P.
H. L.

Introduction to Volume 16

THIS volume contains the first part of Luther's *Lectures on Isaiah*, covering chapters 1–39, or, as he called it, the First Book of Isaiah. It is translated from the lecture notes published for the first time in Weimar, XXXI-2, 1–260.

Early in May 1527, Luther wrote to Wenzeslaus Link in Nürnberg, announcing his intention to translate the Old Testament prophets into German. "At the same time," he continued, "I plan to lecture on Isaiah, to keep from being idle [*lecturus simul Iesaiam, ne otiosus sim*]." It would appear that he began the lectures in July of the same year, for Bugenhagen in a letter of that month refers to "public lectures" of Luther, presumably those on Isaiah. An outbreak of the plague forced the university to transfer operations from Wittenberg to Jena for a while in 1527, and this meant an interruption of the exposition. The reference (p. 40) to the approach of Advent surely means the Advent of 1527. Thus Luther had moved to the commentary on the third chapter shortly before the end of the year.

We are not informed in much detail about his progress after that time. On May 22, 1528, Luther wrote to Spalatin that he was busy with "translating and explaining [*vertendi et illustrandi*]" Isaiah, perhaps speaking of his lectures. The next information we have about the chronology is a marginal comment (p. 184, n. 2) in the manuscript of the lectures on chapter 23, to the effect that at this point the recording of the lectures was taken over by another scribe. Who this scribe was is indicated by a later marginal gloss (p. 312, n. 6), where "Anthony" means Anthony Lauterbach (1502–1569), best known for his role in the compilation of Luther's *Table Talk*. Lauterbach matriculated at Wittenberg in 1528, and in October of that year began to take down Luther's sermons. From this G. Buchwald, the Weimar editor, has concluded that at that time Luther must have been lecturing on Isaiah 23. The only other data, such as they are, are pertinent to the lectures on "The Second Book of Isaiah" and will appear in the Introduction to Volume 17.

As we have already mentioned, the transcribing of these lectures was not the work of a single hand. The scribe who broke off at chapter 23 was George Schmalzing, but that does not necessarily imply that he had taken down all the lectures from the beginning until that point. It would appear that Lauterbach copied the notes of Schmalzing – and of any other amanuensis who may have preserved the earlier lectures – and added his own from chapter 23 on. Lauterbach's version of Luther's lectures is characterized by the appearance of frequent personal reminiscences from Luther's youth, such as the recollection of days at Erfurt (p. 196) or of a particular celebration of the Mass (p. 216) or of the blasphemy of a girl during Luther's youth (p. 312). The parallels between these anecdotes and similar comments in Luther's *Table Talk* suggest that Lauterbach exercised the same fidelity in both. Adding to the verisimilitude of the transcription are such comments as "Martin Luther's opinion" (p. 207), as well as references to preceding lectures (e. g., p. 326, p. 335, p. 338). It is also highly plausible that the many proverbs appearing in the lectures were cited by Luther himself. As is evident from other commentaries (cf. *Luther's Works*, 13, pp. 145–224, for an outstanding example in the *Commentary on Psalm 101* of 1534), Luther did make it a practice to "explain by means of German proverbs, so that the text may be made clear" (p. 277 below). Except where such proverbs appear in the Greek and Latin classics, we have not cited their literary occurrence nor noted their use in other writings of Luther.

It was not until 1914 that these notes on Luther's lectures were published. What was available of Luther's *Lectures on Isaiah* until that time was an edition of scholia, first published at Wittenberg in 1532 and issued again in 1534 in a revised and expanded version (Weimar, XXV, 87–401; Saint Louis, VI, 1–851). Although it was recognized that this edition was anything but a verbatim transcript of Luther's exposition of Isaiah, it did come as close to his *ipsissima verba* as some of the other commentaries that we have included in the American Edition. With the discovery of the Lauterbach manuscript, however, there is neither need nor even justification for relying on the scholia, and we have decided to translate the version closest to Luther himself. On the other hand, there are occasional expansions and corrections in the scholia that clarify obscure statements or allusions in the lecture notes, and we have been able to exploit this resource in some of our footnotes (e. g., p. 245, n. 11). Additional

elucidation of Luther's words has come from the exegetical tradition on which he drew in these lectures, notably from Jerome, whose commentaries he seems to have had before him throughout much of his preparation, but also the medieval exegetes cited in our notes. In the case of the latter, we have tried to determine which may have been the source of Luther's information; but since he cites them anonymously, using such terms as "many" or "the writers," it has not always been possible to decide this with any precision. Perhaps he himself would not have been able to identify the specific scholar from whom he had taken his ideas.

A special instance of Luther's relation to the exegetical tradition in these lectures is his use of the allegorical method of interpretation. Like most of his commentaries on the Old Testament from his maturer years, this exposition of Isaiah warns his hearers against the allegorical extravagances of men such as Origen (e. g., p. 327). But such warnings are usually accompanied by a brief sally of allegorization, almost reluctantly expressed and quite self-consciously held within the limits of evangelical hermeneutics. As we have indicated in our footnotes, some of these allegories are also drawn from the exegetical tradition, but Luther has often added his own characteristic application. In our footnotes we have also taken note of our deviations from the Weimar text. Some of these represent emendations of what are almost certainly misreadings of the manuscript. Others are corrections of what are probably simple typographical errors that occurred in the course either of transcription or of publication. A few are suggestions of what Luther seems to have meant, even though both Lauterbach's version and the Weimar printing may have another reading. Luther's lectures on chapters 40–66, together with special commentaries on Isaiah 9 and Isaiah 53, will appear in Volume 17.

J. P.

LECTURES ON ISAIAH

Chapters 1–39

Translated by
HERBERT J. A. BOUMAN

PREFACE TO THE PROPHET ISAIAH

Two things are necessary to explain the prophet. The first is a knowledge of grammar, and this may be regarded as having the greatest weight. The second is more necessary, namely, a knowledge of the historical background, not only as an understanding of the events themselves as expressed in letters and syllables but as at the same time embracing rhetoric and dialectic, so that the figures of speech and the circumstances may be carefully heeded. Therefore, having command of the grammar in the first place, you must quickly move on to the histories, namely, what those kings under whom Isaiah prophesied did; and these matters must be carefully examined and thoroughly studied.

The chief and leading theme of all the prophets is their aim to keep the people in eager anticipation of the coming Christ. Thus Moses, too, although he teaches many things that should be done, nevertheless always points to the well-known words in Deut. 18:15, where he also keeps the people in eager anticipation of Christ the Teacher, who will come with that authority with which He is endowed in His own right, yes, who will come as the chief Teacher and Disposer. Likewise in our time, too, whatever we teach and establish in the church, we do with a view to getting the people to await the coming of the Savior. Here we must not act in an ungodly manner, but we must live sober, upright, and godly lives (Titus 1:8; 2:12), not, however, as if we always had to stay here ("for here we have no lasting city" [Heb. 13:14] but through Christ we should await another life to come after this life). Whoever knows this will not feel ashamed of the reading and preaching in the course of which the histories must constantly be observed and treated. The prophets must be read in such a way that we prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ. But although the majority of the prophets do speak about a physical kingdom, yet they do (however tersely) lead to Christ. For this reason we must pay more attention to the designs and intentions of the prophets than to their words. Thus, therefore, Isaiah has much to say about his people and the physical kingdom; he condemns sins in one place and praises righteousness in another,

and it seems that almost the entire prophecy is directed toward the people. Meanwhile, however, he also prepares the hearts of the people and causes them to look forward to the coming reign of Christ. Thus Peter says (1 Peter 1:10): "The prophets . . . searched and inquired about this salvation." The rule and government of that particular people teaches how they were helped and protected by God at one time and forsaken and punished at another, and the prophet intersperses these accounts with references to Christ and to us. We read these things as an example for us who must expect the same treatment if we live in the same way. Hence we are taught here to lead a good life in faith and love, and our faith rests on clear prophecies when we see those things that were foretold by God so many centuries ago.

Oecolampadius has translated Isaiah with adequate care.¹

¹ Luther is referring to the commentary on Isaiah by Johannes Oecolampadius, which had appeared at Basel in 1525, under the title: *In Iesaiam prophetam Hypomnematon, hoc est, Commentariorum, Ioannis Oecolampadii Libri VI.*

CHAPTER ONE

1. *The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.*

THIS is the title of the book according to the custom of the Hebrews, who use the opening words of a book as its title.¹ Here we see when Isaiah prophesied, and we are informed about the historical situation. And so this title takes the place of a large commentary. The most valid interpretation of this prophet must be derived from the histories, and both Micah and Hosea were contemporaries of Isaiah.²

Isaiah, however, wrote this book concerning a part of the Jewish people, namely, about Judah, and he does not mention even one king of the other part, which is Israel, because when he had begun to prophesy, the kingdom of Israel had just about been done away with. But the prophet speaks of happenings in the life of the Jewish people, not only of past events but also of future events, something no histories of the Gentiles can do. The prophets condemn sins; they praise righteous deeds and point out future rewards for both. And in this respect they excel other historians.

But this whole prophecy is summed up above all in three parts, namely, the prediction of the coming captivity in Babylonia, secondly, the return from this captivity, and thirdly, what it says about Christ.

Vision. We correctly explain a vision as a prophecy, for the prophets used to be called “seers” (1 Sam. 9:9), certainly a word denoting weakness and humility, as if the prophet were saying: “I come to proclaim the things I have seen.” Thus Christ says (John 3:11): “We bear witness to what we have seen.” The prophet sees; the people hear.

2. *Hear, O heavens [and give ear, O earth; for the Lord has*

¹ Thus, for example, each of the books of the Pentateuch was named in Jewish usage by its opening words; on the other hand, both Joshua and Judges were given these names already in the Hebrew Bible.

² According to Luther’s chronology, *Computation of the Years of the World* (W, LIII, 97—99), Hosea, Isaiah, Joel, Micah, and Nahum all flourished between the years 3210 and 3230 after creation, viz., 750—730 B. C.

spoken]. This is an imitation of Moses (cf. Deut. 32:1) and an intense and fiery exclamation and appeal. For Isaiah is an exceedingly eloquent prophet, endowed with a rich supply of words; he is a man who speaks with great earnestness. But this is Scripture's way: first to terrify, to reveal sins, to bring on the recognition of oneself, to humble hearts. Then, when they have been driven to despair, its second office follows, namely, the buoying up and consolation of consciences, the promises. This is how the Holy Spirit teaches. Satan, on the other hand, worms his way in by means of sweet speeches and flattering words until he infects innocent hearts. Then he leaves behind horrible terror and despair without consolation. For this reason the prophet, speaking in the Holy Spirit, moves in on the people with a loud and powerful exclamation. If anybody could ponder the individual emotions, he would see in each word a furnace and intense heat. Not just anyone can interpret the feelings of the prophets, but one must teach with the aid of the Spirit. The prophet calls on heaven and earth to hear, not to understand but to be witnesses. Do not interpret heaven to mean angels and earth to mean men,³ but know that this is a way of speaking to make the hearers pay attention; as if to say: "Nobody is listening; everybody is ungodly." Therefore let heaven and earth hear. Why this? Because the Lord is speaking, and He is worthy to be heard. Furthermore, while the Lord is speaking, there follows the speech to which nobody listens except him who is of God; as He says (John 8:47): "He who is of God hears the words of God." Therefore wherever it is written: "The Lord speaks," it is immediately indicated who the hearers are, namely, only those who are of God. The others do not hear, even though you shout more than 600 times. And this is said chiefly against the show-off saints, not against those gross sinners. Look at the history. Uzziah, Jotham, and Hezekiah were praiseworthy kings. Under them Isaiah prophesied, and he censured them as sinners in order to comfort them afterwards. Ahaz alone was ungodly. He undoubtedly came from a line of godly kings. The family was godly, and there were many godly subjects. Yet even in their praiseworthy realm the prophet found room for such rebuking. This could justly be done

³ Jerome, *Commentaria in Isaiam prophetam*, Book I, *Patrologia, Series Latina*, XXIV, 25. Because Luther refers to this commentary so frequently, we shall hereafter cite it simply as "Jerome, *Commentaria*," with the number of the book in Roman numerals and the column number from Vol. XXIV of the *Patrologia* in Arabic numerals.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1. *The burden concerning Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw.*

UP UNTIL now Isaiah has preached to the Jewish people both concerning the present physical kingdom and concerning the future spiritual kingdom and the kingdom of Christ. Now he digresses and prophesies against various kingdoms and foreign peoples, and he threatens their destruction as also that of the Jews.

Burden means a prophecy threatening evil, a menacing prediction, and this was a burden, that is,¹ difficult, both for the prophets and for the hearers.

Babylon. The whole area was enclosed with walls. The thickness of the wall was 30 feet, impregnable in appearance; the height was 50 cubits, the towers 60.² The walls were of burnt brick, and the greatest number of people were there. The countryside was very fertile and pleasant, etc. Nevertheless, against this seemingly invincible city Isaiah dares to prophesy that it is to be laid waste, and to such an extent as seems impossible, as would scarcely be believed even though God spoke from heaven. But the prophet describes the matter as if it were already being enacted before the eyes, and he uses grand and powerful words so that what seemed impossible might be believed all the more quickly.

2. *Lift up the banners over the highest mountains*, which are near Babylon. It is as if he were saying: "Your enemies are already on the mountains of the neighborhood and will assault you. They have given the signal, they are shouting to terrify the proud, they are raising the hands to show their power, that it is born both of daring and savageness. The towering mountain also denotes dominion, as elsewhere. They, that is, the enemies of the Babylonians, are to enter the gates of the nobles.

3. *I, God, have commanded My consecrated ones*, that is, "My

¹ The Weimar text has *i a.*, but we have read *i. e.*

² The source of this information about ancient Babylon seems to be Herodotus, *History*, I, 178—181.

[W, XXXI-2, 94, 95]

separated, chosen, prepared ones, namely, the Persians and Medes, whom I have prepared for My work and service." Victory is the gift of God.

I have summoned My mighty men, that is, "My giants and heroes to³ execute to the full My anger against Babylon."

My proudly exulting ones. For I have given them spirit, courage, and daring. They do not rely on their own power.

4. *A tumult on the mountains as of a great multitude*. The repetition shows the fervency and certainty of the matter, and the prophet sets forth what it means to raise a signal. The chariots rumble, the horses neigh, and the men shout, and the number of people is as large as if all the kingdoms of the nations were gathered together. In Hebrew it is "kingdoms" instead of "kings." All this is said for the purpose of striking terror into the Babylonians.

The Lord of hosts is mustering a host for battle. He was so named because of the care with which war was waged for Him. He summoned, reviewed, and arrayed the soldiery and armed host of the Persians and Medes for the war, an army different from that which serves in religious affairs.⁴

5. *They come from a distant land*, from the bounds of heaven. The Hebrews call the sky a dome, or horizon, as much as is seen, and they measure the sky according to the horizons. Likewise, there is the expression "God sits above the heavens of the heavens," that is, above those which divers men inhabit. Here there is one heaven, and elsewhere there is another. Therefore, from the bounds of heaven means as much as the Babylonians can see.

The whole earth, namely, of Babylon.

6. *Wail, for the day of the Lord is near*. And the prophet predicts this as a coming event to the Babylonians, who are now proud. "Woe," says Luke 6:25, "to you that laugh now." *The day of the Lord*, that is, war and devastation from the Almighty. אלהים is a name of God and means "Almighty," whereby the prophets amplify the matter until it means "One whom no one can resist." Therefore the Babylonians are frightened by the nearness of the time and place and by the un-

³ The original text has *et*, but we have followed the suggestion of the Weimar editors and read *ad*.

⁴ This seems to be a reference to the monks.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

1. *O Lord, Thou art my God; I will exalt Thee, I will praise Thy name.*

THIS whole chapter belongs to the preceding, because it deals in like manner with the devastation of Judea. However, it starts out with praise and exaltation of God, in that the prophet rejoices in the Jews' hardening and ungodliness. So the godly may deservedly rejoice over the destruction of the ungodly, just as we would rejoice over a devastation of Rome, and do it piously. Therefore he says here: *O Lord, Thou art my God.* God be praised. *I will exalt Thee,* that is, I will magnify and proclaim Thee.

Wonderful things, namely because of the apostles and the Word. What wonderful things? He answers:

Plans formed of old, "plans which Thou didst form, faithfully and surely, because Thou didst promise these things to Abraham and his descendants. These promises are faithful and true, that is, they are fulfilled and brought to completion." It is as if he were saying: "Thou hast paid up in full, because there is nothing untrue, but Thou hast most generously fulfilled all promises." This is the prophet's joy with regard to the promises carried out and fulfilled by the mercy of God. So we, too, are joyful in the treasure of the Gospel.

2. *For thou hast made the city a heap,* that is, a pile.

The fortified city, that is, armed. Thus, in the second place, he rejoices over the boastful glory of those who put their trust in the fortified city, boasting that Jerusalem was the strong city of God and therefore impregnable.

The palace of aliens, as if to say: "Hitherto Jerusalem was fortified with palaces, but those have been razed, so that it is not a city, for the very citizens of Jerusalem are false and outsiders, and none are genuine citizens."

It will never be rebuilt. In its last destruction Jerusalem will be so thoroughly laid waste that it is never ever to be rebuilt. This is a great text against the Jews.

3. *Will glorify*, that is to say: "From having lost one city, Thou wilt gain a great and strong people, namely, the Gentiles. Until now Thou hast had a small people in a city, but now Thou wilt have a large and numerous nation of Gentiles."

Strong people, cities of ruthless nations, that is, "They will bring sacrifices to Thee in all places. Not only in temples but everywhere they will worship Thee."

4. *For Thou hast become a stronghold to the poor*. This people is large in size; but as for their spirit, they are a poor, afflicted people.

A stronghold to the needy in his distress. Here he describes the kingdom of Christ, which receives the poor, the needy, the afflicted, the weak, and the weary. Of Christ, their King, this is said. When He says that He has been sent to preach the Good News to them, He is exalted (Luke 4:18). To them He says (Matt. 11:28): "Come to Me." To them He is gentle and merciful, but to kings and to the wise He is a terror.

A shelter from the storm. Protection and trust. To Him alone we must flee for refuge. Hurricane, wind storm, and rain storm designate persecuting tyrants. In this storm we shall flee to Christ for refuge and for shade against the burning heat of the sun.

The blast of the ruthless is like a storm against a wall. This is a simile. It is as if he were saying: "Thou art the refuge in a time when the rage and blast of the tyrants makes its assault, as when a storm is borne in upon a wall." Thus in every calamity that befalls us he assures us that the restoration will follow promptly. For we¹ are hardly a hedge and a shaky wall that could set itself against a great swirl of waters and winds. So also we are nothing against the tyrants, we are extremely helpless against their power; but then it follows that we may be comforted in this refuge, Christ, our Asylum.

5. *Like heat in a dry place*. Thou wilt subdue the noise of the aliens like the fiery heat in the desert under a burning cloud. He wants to say: "Thou wilt deliver Thine own from the tyrants as heat does in the desert without rain, drying up all the seeds of the earth."

The shade of a cloud. Mildew and honey dew, which destroys everything, as if to say: "He will withdraw the rain from them and dry them up with heat and give them an altogether poisonous shade and fog."

¹ The Weimar text has *Non*, but we have read *Nos*.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

1. *Draw near, O nations, to hear, and hearken, O peoples! Let the earth listen.*

THE next two chapters bring us up to the remarkable story of Sennacherib. I simply take these two chapters to deal with the transfer of the Jewish kingdom to the church. The first chapter deals with the last destruction. For the Jews, trusting in past promises, were simply unwilling to listen to the new teaching concerning Christ, because in their excessive and secure presumption they dashed against the Cornerstone, and because of this they deserved the supreme and final destruction by the Romans.

Draw near, O nations, to hear, and hearken, O peoples! This is a general admonition addressed to the Jews, whereby the prophet calls on them to hear the coming wrath and rage of God, as if to say: "You are about to hear great and terrifying things about the sword of the Lord."

Let the earth listen, and all that fills it, that is, whatever is in it. This great threat has caused many to think that this refers to the destruction at the Last Judgment.¹ I do not accept this, because of what follows.

2. *For the Lord is enraged against all the nations.* This is a general sword against Jews and Gentiles, because they held a general hatred against Christ and His Word. *Against all their host,* that is, their army and people. For every affair has its own host, as the heaven has its stars. Observe: In the Scriptures "host" denotes every kind of endeavor. Ovid says: "The love of study is a kind of host,"² and Job 7:1 says: "The life of man is warfare," that is, hard service. In short, every kind of endeavor or task, whatever endeavor and task you will. Those who in Hebrew are called its soldiers because they engage in it. So here "host," pursuing various endeavors — priesthoods, religions, etc. — denotes everything that was in opposition to the Word

¹ Jerome, *Commentaria*, X, 382.

² Ovid, *Fasti*, II, 9.

of God. *He has doomed them.* The Jews were put out and given over to physical slaughter as sheep of the slaughter. To put out is to destroy down to the foundation and beyond restoration. The Hebrew word is מִרְיָן. This is what happened to the Jews.

3. *Their slain shall be cast out.* This happened to the people of Jerusalem, that neither time nor place for burial was given them. "They will not be buried with appropriate rites." According to Josephus, pestilence and stench arose from the unburied corpses.³

The mountains shall flow with blood, that is, there will be so great a supply of corpses that the mountains will become soaked with blood.

4. *All the host of heaven shall rot away.* Here you have a new Hebrew theme, which is difficult for Latins to understand. He calls the religion of the Jews the host of heaven. The religion of other nations is of the earth, just as the religion of our monks is of the earth. In Daniel the priests and chief priests, the teachers and prophets themselves are called stars of heaven. As in Dan. 12:3, the prophet compares the prophets and teachers to the stars of heaven. He is speaking, however, concerning the destruction by the Romans, when the religion, worship, and priesthood were of no benefit to them without the hearing of the Word, but became rotten, had to fall into decay, and were transferred to the Gentiles.

And the skies roll up like a book. A book, that is, a scroll. For books and larger sheets were rolled up on a rod. So the sky that is stretched over the Jews in their smugness will be rolled up and hidden, and will clearly not be in use, as a rolled up scroll is no longer read. So also all their religious pomp will perish and be consigned to oblivion. The Jews do not now have a priesthood and a religion, but we Gentiles have them.

All their host shall fall. These are very plain words that are spoken concerning the most holy nation of the Jews. They show that just as the most beautiful leaves fall in winter, so the most excellent Levites, priests, and aristocrats have fallen and died. He calls them shoots of the vine and the fig tree, however, indicating that theirs is not a divinely made ingrafting into some splendid tree, and they were finally cut off because of unbelief, as we read in Rom. 11:20.

5. *For My sword has drunk its fill in the heavens.* This is a Hebrew

³ Josephus, *The Jewish War*, V, 12.