

external nature. He begins with earthquake. "The cleaving of the earth with rivers," is, the breaking of the earth into chasms, which form the channels of rivers. While the surface of the earth is thus torn, he represents even the solid mountains as quaking. Next, he describes an overwhelming deluge of rain. This is the meaning of the words translated "the overflowing of water." It "passed by;" *i. e.*, passed over the field of the prophet's observation. Then, "the deep," the ocean, roars; and lifts up "its hands," its waves, on high. Lastly, the sun and moon, the orbs of heaven, "stand still," amazed, overawed, feeling even in the firmament the dreadful glory of the occasion. It is sufficiently obvious that, in this last line, the prophet had in view the standing still of the sun upon Gibeon, and of the moon in the valley of Ajalon, when Joshua smote the five kings of the Amorites. At the same time, it seems no less obvious that Habakkuk is not immediately referring to the historical event, nor wishing to fix the minds of his readers upon it, but is merely borrowing from it a splendid image, peculiarly appropriate to his purpose. No special historical incidents answer to the cleaving of the earth with rivers,—to the trembling of the mountains,—to the overflowing of the water,—or to the ocean uttering his voice and lifting up his hands; and it would be introducing a disagreeable incongruity, and greatly detracting from the poetical effect of the passage, were we to suppose the prophet, when at the very climax of his flight, suddenly passing from the region of imagination into that of historic matter of fact. Attention has hitherto been concentrated upon Jehovah, and upon the effects of his appearance. In the succeeding lines, his people, at whose head* it was that he went forth, come into view, following him as their leader, and marching

* "O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march forth through the wilderness," &c.—Ps. lxxviii. 7.