THE JOHN CALVIN BIBLE COMMENTARIES

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Commentaries On Isaiah 33-48

John Calvin

Contents:

<u>John Calvin - A Biography</u>

Commentaries On Isaiah 33-48

Chapter 33

Chapter 34

Chapter 35

Chapter 36

Chapter 37

Chapter 38

Chapter 39

Chapter 40

Chapter 41.

Chapter 42.

Chapter 43

Chapter 44

Chapter 45.

Chapter 46

Chapter 47.

Chapter 48

<u>A Translation Of Calvin's Version Of The Prophecies Of Isaiah.</u>

Chapter 33

Chapter 34

Chapter 35

Chapter 36

Chapter 37

Chapter 38

Chapter 39

Chapter 40

Chapter 41

Chapter 42

Chapter 43

Chapter 44

Chapter 45

Chapter 46

Chapter 47

Chapter 48

The Sun-Dial Of Ahaz.

Footnotes

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John Calvin - A Biography

By William Barry

This man, undoubtedly the greatest of Protestant divines, and perhaps, after St. Augustine, the most perseveringly followed by his disciples of any Western writer on theology, was born at Noyon in Picardy, France, 10 July, 1509, and died at Geneva, 27 May, 1564.

A generation divided him from Luther, whom he never met. By birth, education, and temper these two protagonists of the reforming movement were strongly contrasted. Luther was a Saxon peasant, his father a miner; Calvin sprang from the French middle-class, and his father, an attorney, had purchased the freedom of the City of Noyon, where he practised civil and canon law. Luther entered the Order of Augustinian Hermits, took a monk's vows, was made a priest and incurred much odium by marrying a nun. Calvin never was ordained in the Catholic Church; his training was chiefly in law and the humanities; he took no vows. Luther's eloquence made him popular by its force, humour, rudeness, and vulgar style. Calvin spoke to the learned at all times, even when preaching before multitudes. His manner is classical; he reasons on system; he has little humour; instead of striking with a cudgel he uses the weapons of a deadly logic and persuades by a teacher's authority, not by a demagogue's calling of names. He writes French as well as Luther writes German, and like him has been reckoned a pioneer in the modern development of his native tongue. Lastly, if we term the doctor of Wittenberg a mystic, we may sum up Calvin as a scholastic; he gives articulate expression to the principles which Luther had

stormily thrown out upon the world in his vehement pamphleteering; and the "Institutes" as they were left by their author have remained ever since the standard of orthodox Protestant belief in all the Churches known as "Reformed." His French disciples called their sect "the religion"; such it has proved to be outside the Roman world.

The family name, spelt in many ways, was Cauvin latinized according to the custom of the age as Calvinus. For some unknown reason the Reformer is commonly called Maître Jean C. His mother, Jeanne Le Franc, born in the Diocese of Cambrai, is mentioned as "beautiful and devout"; she took her little son to various shrines and brought him up a good Catholic. On the father's side, his ancestors were seafaring men. His grandfather settled at Pont l'Evêgue near Paris, and had two sons who became locksmiths; the third was Gerard, who turned procurator at Noyon, and there his four sons and two daughters saw the light. He lived in the Place au Blé (Cornmarket). Noyon, a bishop's see, had long been a fief of the powerful old family of Hangest, who treated it as their personal property. But an everlasting quarrel, in which the city took part, went on between the bishop and the chapter. Charles de Hangest, nephew of the too wellknown Georges d'Amboise, Archbishop of Rouen, surrendered the bishopric in 1525 to his own nephew John, becoming his vicar-general. John kept up the battle with his canons until the Parliament of Paris intervened, upon which he went to Rome, and at last died in Paris in 1577. This prelate had Protestant kinsfolk; he is charged with having fostered heresy which in those years was beginning to raise its head among the French. Clerical dissensions, at all events, allowed the new doctrines a promising field; and the Calvins were more or less infected by them before 1530.

Gerard's four sons were made clerics and held benefices at a tender age. The Reformer was given one when a boy of twelve, he became Curé of Saint-Martin de Marteville in the Vermandois in 1527, and of Pont l'Evegue in 1529. Three of the boys attended the local Collège des Capettes, and there John proved himself an apt scholar. But his people were intimate with greater folk, the de Montmor, a branch of the line of Hangest, which led to his accompanying some of their children to Paris in 1523, when his mother was probably dead and his father had married again. The latter died in 1531, under excommunication from the chapter for not sending in his accounts. The old man's illness, not his lack of honesty, was, we are told, the cause. Yet his son Charles, nettled by the censure, drew towards the Protestant doctrines. He was accused in 1534 of denying the Catholic dogma of the Eucharist, and died out of the Church in 1536; his body was publicly gibbeted as that of a recusant.

Meanwhile, young John was going through his own trials at the University of Paris, the dean or syndic of which, Noel Bédier, had stood up against Erasmus and bore hard upon Le Fèvre d'Etaples (Stapulensis), celebrated for his translation of the Bible into French. Calvin, a "martinet", or oppidan, in the Collèege de la Marche, made this man's acquaintance (he was from Picardy) and may have glanced into his Latin commentary on St. Paul, dated 1512, which Doumerque considers the first Protestant book emanating from a French pen. Another influence tending the same way was that of Corderius, Calvin's tutor, to whom he dedicated afterwards his annotation of I Thessalonians, remarking, "if there be any good thing in what I have published, I owe it to you". Corderius had an excellent Latin style, his life was austere, and his "Colloquies" earned him enduring fame. But he fell under suspicion of heresy, and by Calvin's aid took refuge in Geneva, where he died

September 1564. A third herald of the "New Learning" was George Cop, physician to Francis I, in whose house Calvin found a welcome and gave ear to the religious discussions which Cop favoured. And a fourth was Pierre-Robert d'Olivet of Noyon, who also translated the Scriptures, our youthful man of letters, his nephew, writing (in 1535) a Latin preface to the Old Testament and a French one — his first appearance as a native author — to the New Testament.

By 1527, when no more than eighteen, Calvin's education was complete in its main lines. He had learned to be a humanist and a reformer. The "sudden conversion" to a spiritual life in 1529, of which he speaks, must not be taken quite literally. He had never been an ardent Catholic; but the stories told at one time of his ill-regulated conduct have no foundation; and by a very natural process he went over to the side on which his family were taking their stand. In 1528 he inscribed himself at Orléans as a law student, made friends with Francis Daniel, and then went for a year to Bourges, where he began preaching in private. Margaret d'Angoulême, sister of Francis I, and Duchess of Berry, was living there with many heterodox Germans about her.

He is found again at Paris in 1531. Wolmar had taught him Greek at Bourges; from Vatable he learned Hebrew; and he entertained some relations with the erudite Budaeus. About this date he printed a commentary on Seneca's "De Clementiâ". It was merely an exercise in scholarship, having no political significance. Francis I was, indeed, handling Protestants severely, and Calvin, now Doctor of Law at Orléans, composed, so the story runs, an oration on Christian philosophy which Nicholas Cop delivered on All Saints' Day, 1532, both writer and speaker having to take instant flight from pursuit by the royal inquisitors. This legend has been rejected by modern critics. Calvin spent

some time, however, with Canon du Tillet at Angoulême under a feigned designation. In May, 1534, he went to Noyon, gave up his benefice, and, it is said, was imprisoned. But he got away to Nerac in Bearn, the residence of the Duchess Margaret, and there again encountered Le Fèvre, whose French Bible had been condemned by the Sorbonne to the flames. His next visit to Paris fell out during a violent campaign of the Lutherans against the Mass, which brought on reprisals, Etienne de la Forge and others were burnt in the Place de Grève; and Calvin accompanied by du Tillet, escaped — though not without adventures — to Metz and Strasburg. In the latter city Bucer reigned supreme. The leading reformers dictated laws from the pulpit to their adherents, and this journey proved a decisive one for the French humanist, who, though by nature timid and shy, committed himself to a war on paper with his own sovereign. The famous letter to Francis I is dated 23 August, 1535. It served as a prologue to the "Institutes", of which the first edition came out in March, 1536, not in French but in Latin. Calvin's apology for lecturing the king was, that placards denouncing the Protestants as rebels had been posted up all over the realm. Francis I did not read these pages, but if he had done so he would have discovered in them a plea, not for toleration, which the Reformer utterly scorned, but for doing away with Catholicism in favour of the new gospel. There could be only one true Church, said the young theologian, therefore kings ought to make an utter end of popery. (For an account of the "Institutes" see) The second edition belongs to 1539, the first French translation to 1541; the final Latin, as revised by its author, is of 1559; but that in common use, dated 1560, has additions by his disciples. "It was more God's work than mine", said Calvin, who took for his motto "Omnia ad Dei gloriam", and in allusion to the change he had undergone in 1529 assumed for his device a hand stretched out from a burning heart.

A much disputed chapter in Calvin's biography is the visit which he was long thought to have paid at Ferraro to the Protestant Duchess Renée, daughter of Louis XII. Many stories clustered about his journey, now given up by the best-informed writers. All we know for certain is that the Reformer, after settling his family affairs and bringing over two of his brothers and sisters to the views he had adopted undertook, in consequence of the war between Charles V and Francis I, to reach Bale by way of Geneva, in July, 1536. At Geneva the Swiss preacher Fare, then looking for help in his propaganda, besought him with such vehemence to stay and teach theology that, as Calvin himself relates, he was terrified into submission. We are not accustomed to fancy the austere prophet so easily frightened. But as a student and recluse new to public responsibilities, he may well have hesitated before plunging into the troubled waters of Geneva, then at their stormiest period. No portrait of him belonging to this time is extant. Later he is represented as of middle height, with bent shoulders, piercing eyes, and a large forehead; his hair was of an auburn tinge. Study and fasting occasioned the severe headaches from which he suffered continually. In private life he was cheerful but sensitive, not to say overbearing, his friends treated him with delicate consideration. His habits were simple; he cared nothing for wealth, and he never allowed himself a holiday. His correspondence, of which 4271 letters remain, turns chiefly on doctrinal subjects. Yet his strong, reserved character told on all with whom he came in contact; Geneva submitted to his theocratic rule, and the Reformed Churches accepted his teaching as though it were infallible.

Such was the stranger whom Farel recommended to his fellow Protestants, "this Frenchman", chosen to lecture on the Bible in a city divided against itself. Geneva had about

15,000 inhabitants. Its bishop had long been its prince limited, however, by popular privileges. The vidomne, or mayor, was the Count of Savoy, and to his family the bishopric seemed a property which, from 1450, they bestowed on their younger children. John of Savoy, illegitimate son of the previous bishop, sold his rights to the duke, who was head of the clan, and died in 1519 at Pignerol. Jean de la Baume, last of its ecclesiastical princes, abandoned the city, which received Protestant teachers from Berne in 1519 and from Fribourg in 1526. In 1527 the arms of Savoy were torn down; in 1530 the Catholic party underwent defeat, and Geneva became independent. It had two councils, but the final verdict on public measures rested with the people. These appointed Farel, a convert of Le Fevre, as their preacher in 1534. A discussion between the two Churches from 30 May to 24 June, 1535 ended in victory for the Protestants. The altars were desecrated, the sacred images broken, the Mass done away with. Bernese troops entered and "the Gospel" was accepted, 21 May, 1536. This implied persecution of Catholics by the councils which acted both as Church and State. Priests were thrown into prison; citizens were fined for not attending sermons. At Zürich, Basle, and Berne the same laws were established. Toleration did not enter into the ideas of the time.

But though Calvin had not introduced this legislation, it was mainly by his influence that in January, 1537 the "articles" were voted which insisted on communion four times a year, set spies on delinquents, established a moral censorship, and punished the unruly with excommunication. There was to be a children's catechism, which he drew up; it ranks among his best writings. The city now broke into "jurants" and "nonjurors" for many would not swear to the "articles"; indeed, they never were completely accepted. Questions had arisen with Berne

touching points that Calvin judged to be indifferent. He made a figure in the debates at Lausanne defending the freedom of Geneva. But disorders ensued at home, where recusancy was yet rife; in 1538 the council exiled Farel, Calvin, and the blind evangelist, Couraud. The Reformer went to Strasburg, became the guest of Capito and Bucer, and in 1539 was explaining the New Testament to French refugees at fifty two florins a year. Cardinal Sadolet had addressed an open letter to the Genevans, which their exile now answered. Sadolet urged that schism was a crime; Calvin replied that the Roman Church was corrupt. He gained applause by his keen debating powers at Hagenau, Worms, and Ratisbon. But he complains of his poverty and ill-health, which did not prevent him from marrying at this time Idelette de Bure, the widow of an Anabaptist whom he had converted. Nothing more is known of this lady, except that she brought him a son who died almost at birth in 1542, and that her own death took place in 1549.

After some negotiation Ami Perrin, commissioner for Geneva, persuaded Calvin to return. He did so, not very willingly, on 13 September, 1541. His entry was modest enough. The church constitution now recognized "pastors, doctors, elders, deacons" but supreme power was given to the magistrate. Ministers had the spiritual weapon of God's word; the consistory never, as such, wielded the secular arm Preachers, led by Calvin, and the councils, instigated by his opponents, came frequently into collision. Yet the ordinances of 1541 were maintained; the clergy, assisted by lay elders, governed despotically and in detail the actions of every citizen. A presbyterian Sparta might be seen at Geneva; it set an example to later Puritans, who did all in their power to imitate its discipline. The pattern held up was that of the Old Testament, although Christians were supposed to enjoy Gospel liberty. In November, 1552, the Council declared that Calvin's "Institutes" were a "holy

doctrine which no man might speak against." Thus the State issued dogmatic decrees, the force of which had been anticipated earlier, as when Jacques Gouet was imprisoned on charges of impiety in June, 1547, and after severe torture was beheaded in July. Some of the accusations brought against the unhappy young man were frivolous, others doubtful. What share, if any, Calvin took in this judgment is not easy to ascertain. The execution of however must be laid at his door; it has given greater offence by far than the banishment of Castellio or the penalties inflicted on Bolsec — moderate men opposed to extreme views in discipline and doctrine, who fell under suspicion as reactionary. The Reformer did not shrink from his self-appointed task. Within five years fifty-eight sentences of death and seventy-six of exile, besides numerous committals of the most eminent citizens to prison, took place in Geneva. The iron voke could not be shaken off. In 1555, under Ami Perrin, a sort of revolt was attempted. No blood was shed, but Perrin lost the day, and Calvin's theocracy triumphed.

"I am more deeply scandalized", wrote Gibbon "at the single execution of Servetus than at the hecatombs which have blazed in the autos-da-fé of Spain and Portugal". He ascribes the enmity of Calvin to personal malice and perhaps envy. The facts of the case are pretty well ascertained. Born in 1511, perhaps at Tudela, Michael Served y Reves studied at Toulouse and was present in Bologna at the coronation of Charles V. He travelled in Germany and brought out in 1531 at Hagenau his treatise "De Trinitatis Erroribus", a strong Unitarian work which made much commotion among the more orthodox Reformers. He met Calvin and disputed with him at Paris in 1534, became corrector of the press at Lyons; gave attention to medicine, discovered the lesser circulation of the blood, and entered into a fatal correspondence with the

dictator of Geneva touching a new volume "Christianismi Restitutio," which he intended to publish. In 1546 the exchange of letters ceased. The Reformer called Servetus arrogant (he had dared to criticize the "Institutes" in marginal glosses), and uttered the significant menace, "If he comes here and I have any authority, I will never let him leave the place alive." The "Restitutio" appeared in 1553. Calvin at once had its author delated to the Dominican inquisitor Ory at Lyons, sending on to him the man's letters of 1545-46 and these glosses. Hereupon the Spaniard was imprisoned at Vienne, but he escaped by friendly connivance, and was burnt there only in effigy. Some extraordinary fascination drew him to Geneva, from which he intended to pass the Alps. He arrived on 13 August, 1553. The next day Calvin, who had remarked him at the sermon, got his critic arrested, the preacher's own secretary coming forward to accuse him. Calvin drew up forty articles of charge under three heads, concerning the nature of God, infant baptism, and the attack which Servetus had ventured on his own teaching. The council hesitated before taking a deadly decision, but the dictator, reinforced by Farel, drove them on. In prison the culprit suffered much and loudly complained. The Bernese and other Swiss voted for some indefinite penalty. But to Calvin his power in Geneva seemed lost, while the stigma of heresy; as he insisted, would cling to all Protestants if this innovator were not put to death. "Let the world see" Bullinger counselled him, "that Geneva wills the glory of Christ."

Accordingly, sentence was pronounced 26 October, 1553, of burning at the stake. "Tomorrow he dies," wrote Calvin to Farel. When the deed was done, the Reformer alleged that he had been anxious to mitigate the punishment, but of this fact no record appears in the documents. He disputed with Servetus on the day of execution and saw the end. A

defence and apology next year received the adhesion of the Genevan ministers. Melanchthon, who had taken deep umbrage at the blasphemies of the Spanish Unitarian, strongly approved in well-known words. But a group that included Castellio published at Basle in 1554 a pamphlet with the title, "Should heretics be persecuted?" It is considered the first plea for toleration in modern times. Beza replied by an argument for the affirmative, couched in violent terms; and Calvin, whose favorite disciple he was, translated it into French in 1559. The dialogue, "Vaticanus", written against the "Pope of Geneva" by Castellio, did not get into print until 1612. Freedom of opinion, as Gibbon remarks, "was the consequence rather than the design of the Reformation."

Another victim to his fiery zeal was Gentile, one of an Italian sect in Geneva, which also numbered among its adherents Alciati and Gribaldo. As more or less Unitarian in their views, they were required to sign a confession drawn up by Calvin in 1558. Gentile subscribed it reluctantly, but in the upshot he was condemned and imprisoned as a perjurer. He escaped only to be twice incarcerated at Berne, where in 1566, he was beheaded. Calvin's impassioned polemic against these Italians betrays fear of the Socinianism which was to lay waste his vineyard. Politically he leaned on the French refugees, now abounding in the city, and more than equal in energy — if not in numbers — to the older native factions. Opposition died out. His continual preaching, represented by 2300 sermons extant in the manuscripts and a vast correspondence, gave to the Reformer an influence without example in his closing years. He wrote to Edward VI, helped in revising the Book of Common Prayer, and intervened between the rival English parties abroad during the Marian period. In the Huguenot troubles he sided with the more moderate. His censure of the conspiracy of

Amboise in 1560 does him honour. One great literary institution founded by him, the College, afterwards the University, of Geneva, flourished exceedingly. The students were mostly French. When Beza was rector it had nearly 1500 students of various grades.

Geneva now sent out pastors to the French congregations and was looked upon as the Protestant Rome. Through Knox, "the Scottish champion of the Swiss Reformation", who had been preacher to the exiles in that city, his native land accepted the discipline of the Presbytery and the doctrine of predestination as expounded in Calvin's "Institutes". The Puritans in England were also descendants of the French theologian. His dislike of theatres, dancing and the amenities of society was fully shared by them. The town on Lake Leman was described as without crime and destitute of amusements. Calvin declaimed against the "Libertines", but there is no evidence that any such people had a footing inside its walls The cold, hard, but upright disposition characteristic of the Reformed Churches, less genial than that derived from Luther, is due entirely to their founder himself. Its essence is a concentrated pride, a love of disputation, a scorn of opponents. The only art that it tolerates is music, and that not instrumental. It will have no Christian feasts in its calendar, and it is austere to the verge of Manichaean hatred of the body. When dogma fails the Calvinist, he becomes, as in the instance of Carlyle, almost a pure Stoic. "At Geneva, as for a time in Scotland," says J. A. Froude, "moral sins were treated as crimes to be punished by the magistrate." The Bible was a code of law, administered by the clergy. Down to his dying day Calvin preached and taught. By no means an aged man, he was worn out in these frequent controversies. On 25 April, 1564, he made his will, leaving 225 French crowns, of which he begueathed ten to his college, ten to the poor, and the remainder to his nephews and nieces. His last letter

was addressed to Farel. He was buried without pomp, in a spot which is not now ascertainable. In the year 1900 a monument of expiation was erected to Servetus in the Place Champel. Geneva has long since ceased to be the head of Calvinism. It is a rallying point for Free Thought, Socialist propaganda, and Nihilist conspiracies. But in history it stands out as the Sparta of the Reformed churches, and Calvin is its Lycurgus.

COMMENTARIES ON ISAIAH 33-48

CHAPTER 33

Isaiah 33:1-24

- 1. Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou *wast* not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee. 1. Vae qui spolias, nec fuisti spoliatus; qui inique agis, nec inique actum in to fuit! Ubi desieris spoilare, spoliaberis; ubi tinem inique agendi feceris, inique in to agetur.
- 2. O Lord, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee: be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble.
 2. Iehova, miserere nostri; in to speravimus; esto, qui fuisti brachium eorum in matutinis, etiam salus nostra in tempore tribulationis.
- **3.** At the noise of the tumult the people fled; at the lifting up of thyself the nations were scattered. **3.** A voce tumultus fugerunt pcpuli; ab exaltatione tua dissipatae sunt gentes.
- **4.** And your spoil shall be gathered *like* the gathering of the caterpillar: as the running to and fro of locusts shall he run upon them. **4.** Et colligetur

praeda vestra collectione bruchorum; secundum discursum locustarum pergens illuc.

- 5. The Lord is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness.5. Exaltatus est Iehova, qui habitat in excelsis. Implevit Sion judicio et justitia.
- **6.** And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of the times, *and* strength of salvation: the fear of the Lord is his treasure. **6.** Et erit stabilitas temporum tuorum fortitudo, salutes, sapientia, et scientia; timor Jehovae ipse thesaurus ejus.
- 7. Behold, their valiant ones shall cry without; the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly.7. Ecce nuncii eorum vociferabuntur foris; legati pacis amare flebunt.
- 8. The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth; he hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth no man.8. Desolatae sunt viae, cessavit viator; irritum fecit foedus, sprevit civitates, nihil reputavit hominem.
- 9. The earth mourneth and languisheth; Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down; Sharon is like a wilderness; and Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits.
 9. Luxit, emarcuit terra; pudefactus est Libanus et succisus; facta est Saron instar deserti; excussus est Basan et Carmelus.
- 10. Now will I rise, saith the Lord; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself.10. Nunc surgam, dicit Jehova; nunc exaltabor, nunc extollar.
- 11. Ye shall conceive chaff; ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath, as fire, shall devour you.11. Concipietis quisquilias, parietis stipulas; spiritus vestri ignis devorabit vos.
- 12. And the people shall be as the burnings of lime: as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire.

 12. Et erunt populi combustiones calcis, (vel, calx combusta,) tanquam spinae abscissae igni exurentur.

- 13. Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done; and, ye that are near, acknowledge my might.13. Andite, qui longe abestis, quid fecerim; cognoscite, vicini, potentiam meam.
- 14. The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites: who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?

 14. Expaverunt in Sion impii; terror apprehendit hypocritas (vel, sceleratos.) Quis ex nobis (vel, pro nobis) habitabit cam igne devorante? Quis ex nobis habitabit cum ardoribus aeternis?
- 15. He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil;

 15. Ambulans injustitiis, loquens recta, aspernars lucrum ex vi et calumnia, excutiens manus suas a susceptione muneris; obturans aurem suam, ne audiat sanguines; comprimens oculos suos, ne videat malum.
- 16. He shall dwell on high; his place of defense *shall be* the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him, his waters *shall be* sure.

 16. Hic in excelsis habitabit; propugnacula petrarum asylum ejus; huic panis dabitur, et aquae ejus certae (erunt.)
- 17. Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off.17. Regem in decore suo videbunt oculi tui; videbunt terram procul remotam.
- **18.** Thine heart shall meditate terror. Where *is* the scribe? where *is* the receiver? where *is* he that counted the towers? **18.** Cor tuum meditabitur terrorem. Ubi scriba? Ubi appensor? Ubi qui annotat domos insigniores?
- **19.** Thou shalt not see a fierce people, a people of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive; of a stammering tongue, *that thou canst* not understand.

- **19.** Popalum trucem non videbis, populum abstrusi labii, ut non intelligas; linguae balbae, ut non capins.
- 20. Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle *that* shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken:

 20. Aspice Sionem civitatem solennitatum (vel, conventuum) nostrarum; oculi tui videbunt Ierusalem, habitaculum tranquillum, tentorium quod non transferetur; cujus paxilli non amovebuntur in seculum, et cujus funes cuncti non rumpentur.
- 21. But there the glorious Lord *will be* unto us a place of broad rivers *and* streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.

 21. Adeo (vel, quia si) illic fortis nobis Iehova locus fluminum, rivorum spatiis amplorum, per quem non transibit navis remigum, et per quem navis magnifica non pertransibit.
- 22. For the Lord *is* our judge, the Lord *is* our lawgiver, the Lord *is* our king; he will save us.

 22. Quia Iehova judex noster, Iehova legislator noster, Iehova rex noster; idem servabit nos.
- 23. Thy tacklings are loosed; they could not well strengthen their mast; they could not spread the sail: then is the prey of a great spoil divided; the lame take the prey.

 23. Laxati sunt funes tui, ut non solidaverint malum suum, neque expanderint velum; tunc divisa est praeda spolii multi, claudi quoque dirlpuerunt praedam.
- **24.** And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein *shall be* forgiven *their* iniquity.
- **24.** Nec dicet habitator, *A*Egrotus sum; populus habitans in ea solutus est ab iniquitate.

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1. Wo to thee that spoilest. If these words shall be expounded as relating to the Babylonians, the strain will flow easily enough; for, after having promised freedom to the prisoners, (Isaiah 32:15,) he now appropriately taunts the conquerors. Besides, they needed to be peculiarly confirmed, that they might give credit to a prediction which appeared to be incredible; for they could not think it probable that such vast power would be destroyed and overthrown, and that, the wretched prisoners who were now in a state of despair would speedily be permitted to return to their native country. Amidst such distresses, therefore, they might have fainted and given up all hope of safety, if the Prophet had not met them with these exhortations. Accordingly, he anticipates those doubts which might have tormented their minds and tempted them to despair, after having been carried away by the Babylonians, and reduced to slavery; for they saw none of those things which are here promised, but everything entirely opposite.

Yet, as it is almost universally agreed that this is the beginning of a new discourse, and that it is addressed to Sennacherib and his army, I am not unwilling to believe that the Prophet pronounces against the Assyrians, who unjustly oppressed all their neighbors, a threatening which was intended to alleviate the distresses and anxieties of the people. He therefore means that there will be a wonderful revolution of affairs, which will overthrow the flourishing condition of Nineveh, though it appears to be invincible; for the Babylonians will come in a hostile manner to punish them for that cruelty which they exercised on other nations.

In order to impart greater energy to this discourse, he addresses the Assyrians themselves, "Wo to thee that plunderest; you may now ravage with impunity; no one has power to resist you; but there will one day be those who in their turn shall plunder you, as you have plundered others." He speaks to them in the singular number, but in a collective sense, which is very customary. Others read it as a question, "Shalt thou not be spoiled? Dost thou think that thou wilt never be punished for that violence? There will one day be those who will render to thee the like." But we may follow the ordinary exposition, according to which the Prophet exhibits in a striking light the injustice of enemies, who were so eager for plunder that they spared nobody, not even the innocent who had never injured them; for that is a demonstration of the utmost cruelty. I am therefore the more disposed to adopt this exposition, according to which he describes in this first clause what the Assyrians are, shews them to be base and cruel robbers, and gives a strong exhibition of their cruelty in harassing and pillaging harmless and inoffensive persons; so that, when the Jews beheld such unrestrained injustice, they might consider that God is just, and that such proceedings will not always pass unpunished.

When thou shalt have ceased to plunder. This is the second clause of the sentence, by which the Prophet declares that the Assyrians now plunder, because God has given loose reins to them, but that he will one day check them, so that they will have no power to do injury. If we were to understand him to mean, "when they would no longer wish to plunder," that would be a feeble interpretation; but the Prophet advances higher, and declares that the time will come "when they shall make an end of plundering," because the Lord will restrain and subdue them. The meaning is therefore the same as if he had said, "When

thou shalt have reached the height;" for we see that tyrants have boundaries assigned to them which they cannot pass. Their career is rapid, so long as they keep their course; but as soon as the goal, their utmost limit, has been reached, they must stop.

Let us cheer our hearts with this consolation, when we see tyrants insolently and fiercely attack the Church of God; for the Lord will at length compel them to stop, and the more cruel they have been, the more severely will they be punished. The Lord will destroy them in a moment; for he will raise up against them enemies who will instantly ruin and punish them for their iniquities.

Here we ought also to acknowledge the providence of God in the overthrow of kingdoms; for wicked men imagine that everything moves at random and by the blind violence of fortune; but we ought to take quite another view, for the Lord will repay their deserts, so that they shall be made to know that the cruelty which they exercised against inoffensive persons does not remain unrevenged. And the event shewed the truth of this prediction; for not long afterwards Nineveh was conquered by the Babylonians, and lost the monarchy, and was even so completely destroyed that it lost its name. But as Babylon, who succeeded in her room, was not. less a "spoiler," the Prophet justly foretells that there will be other robbers to rob her, and that the Babylonians, when their monarchy shall be overthrown, will themselves be plundered of those things which they seized and pillaged from others.

2. O Jehovah, have pity upon us. This sentiment was added by the Prophet, in order to remind the godly where they ought to go amidst such distresses, even when they shall appear to be deprived of all hope of safety; that they ought

to betake themselves to prayer, to supplicate from God the fulfillment of these promises, even when they shall be most wretched, and when the power of the enemy to oppress them cruelly shall be very formidable. And here we ought carefully to observe the order which the Prophet has followed, in first exhibiting the promise of God and immediately exhorting to prayer. Not only so, but he breaks off the stream of his discourse, and suddenly bursts out into prayer; for although the Lord hastens to perform what he has promised, yet he delays for a time, in order to exercise our patience. But when we ought to wait, there is found in us no steadfastness or perseverance; our hearts immediately faint and. languish. We ought, therefore, to have recourse to prayer, which alone can support and gladden our hearts, while we look earnestly towards God, by whose guidance alone we shall be delivered from our distresses. Yet let us patiently, with unshaken hope and confidence, expect what he has promised to us; for at length he will shew that he is faithful, and will not disappoint us.

At the same time the Prophet bids us not only consider in general the judgment of God against the Assyrians, but God's fatherly kindness towards his chosen people; as if he had said that the Assyrians will be destroyed, not only that they may receive the just reward of their avarice and cruelty, but because in this manner God will be pleased to provide for the safety of his Church. But while he exhorts us to pray for mercy, he likewise declares that we shall be miserable.

In thee have we hoped. In order to cherish the hope of obtaining favor, believers next declare that they "have hoped in God," on whom they now call; and indeed our

prayers must be idle and useless, if they are not founded on this principle.

"Let thy mercy be upon us," saith David,

"according as we have hoped in thee." (Psalm 33:22.)

For to go into the presence of God, if he did not open up the way by his word, would be excessively rash; and, therefore, as he kindly and gently invites us, so we ought to embrace his word, whenever we approach to him. Besides, patience must be added to faith; and, therefore, when faith is taken away, we do not deserve that the Lord should hear us, for it is by faith that we call upon him. Now faith alone is the mother of calling on God, as is frequently declared in many passages of Scripture; and if faith be wanting, there can be nothing left in us but hypocrisy, than which nothing is more abhorred by God. (Romans 10:14.)

And hence it is evident that there is no Christianity in the whole of Popery; for if the chief part of the worship of God consists of prayer, and if they know not what it is to pray, (for they bid us continually doubt, and even accuse of rashness the faith of the godly,) what kind of worshippers of God are they? Can that prayer be lawful which is perplexed by uncertainty, and which does not rely with firm confidence on the promises of God? Do not those Rabbins, who wish to be reckoned theologians, shew that they are mere babes? Certainly our children excel them in knowledge and in the true light of godliness. F603

Let us also learn from these words that our faith is proved by adversity; for the actual trial of faith is when, with unshaken patience in opposition to all dangers and assaults, we continue to rely on the word and the promises. Thus we shall give practical evidence that we have sincerely believed.

Be what thou hast been, their arm in the morning. Others render it as if it were a continued prayer, "Be our arm in the morning, and our salvation in tribulation." As to believers speaking in the third person, they consider it to be a change which is frequently employed by the Hebrews. But I think that the Prophet's meaning is different; for he intended to express that desire which is rendered more intense by benefits formerly received; and, therefore, in my opinion, that clause is appropriately inserted, "their arm in the morning," in which I supply the words "who hast been," in order to bring forward the ancient benefits bestowed by God on the fathers. "Thou, Lord, didst hearken to the prayers of our fathers; when they fled to thee, thou gavest them assistance i now also be thou our salvation, and relieve us from our afflictions."

"Arm" and "salvation" differ in this respect, that "arm" denotes the power which the Lord exerted in defense of his Church, and that before she was afflicted; while "salvation" denotes the deliverance by which the Lord rescues the Church, even when she appears to be ruined. He therefore places on record ancient benefits which the Lord formerly bestowed on the fathers, that he may be moved to exercise the same compassion towards the children. As if he had said, "O Lord, thou didst formerly turn away the dangers which threatened thy Church; relying on thy favor she flourished and prospered. Thou didst also deliver her when oppressed. In like manner wilt thou act on our own account, especially since it belongs to thy character to render assistance when matters are desperate and at the worst." F604

The particle ãa, (aph,) even, is very emphatic for confirming our faith, that we may not doubt that God, who always continues to be like himself, and never degenerates from his nature or swerves from his purpose, will also be our deliverer; for, such have believers found him to be. We ought, therefore, to place continually before our eyes the manner in which the Lord formerly assisted and delivered the fathers, that we may be fully convinced that we also shall not fail to obtain from him assistance and deliverance.

3. At the voice of the tumult the peoples fled. He now returns to the former doctrine, or rather he continues it, after having inserted a short exclamation. He had already shewn that the Assyrians would be defeated, though they appeared to be out of the reach of all danger; and now he bids the Jews look upon it as having actually taken place; for their power was vast, and all men dreaded them and reckoned them invincible. Isaiah therefore places before the eyes of the Jews the dreadful ruin of the Assyrians, as if it had been already accomplished. He makes use of the plural number, saying that they were peoples; for the kingdom of the Assyrians consisted of various "peoples," and their army had been collected out of various nations; and therefore he affirms that, although their number was prodigious and boundless, yet they would miserably perish.

At thy exaltation. The word "exaltation" is explained by some to mean the "manifestation" by which the Lord illustriously displayed what he was able to do. But I explain it in a more simple manner, that the Lord, who formerly seemed as it were to remain at rest, when he permitted the Babylonians to ravage with impunity, now suddenly came forth to public view; for his delay was undoubtedly treated with proud scorn by the enemies, as if the God of Israel had been humbled and vanguished; but at length he arose and

sat down on his judgmentseat, and took vengeance on the crimes of the ungodly. There is therefore an implied contrast between the "exaltation" and that kind of weakness which the Lord appeared to exhibit, when he permitted his people to be afflicted and scattered. F605

By "the voice of the tumult" some suppose to be meant that the Lord will put the enemies to flight by merely making a noise; but that interpretation, I fear, is more ingenious than solid. I therefore willingly interpret the word "voice" to mean the loud noise which would be raised by the Medes and Persians.

4. And your prey shall be gathered. Here he addresses the Assyrians, if it be not thought preferable to refer it to the Jews, and to take the word "prey" in an active sense. But the former opinion is more *appropriate*; and this sudden turn of direct address imparts great vehemence to the prediction, when he openly and expressly taunts the proud adversaries. Yet it is doubtful whether it denotes the final ruin of the nation, or the defeat of King Sennacherib, when his army was destroyed by the hand of an angel before the walls of Jerusalem. (2 Kings 19:35.) The latter opinion has been adopted by almost all commentators, but it appears to me to be too limited; for I think that the Prophet, from the beginning of the chapter, intended to express something more, when he spoke of the destruction of that nation, The prophecy might even be still farther extended, as I suggested a little ago, so as to include likewise the Babylonians, who were the latest enemies of the Church; but, passing this, it is sufficiently evident that his pen is directed against the monarchy of Nineveh.

By your gathering of caterpillars. He compares that warlike nation to "caterpillars," because they will have no power to

resist, but will all tremble and faint, so that they shall be gathered into large heaps to be destroyed. The comparison is highly appropriate, and is employed also by the Prophet Nahum, (Nahum 3:15,) though in a somewhat different sense; for that insect, we know, is exceedingly destructive to trees, and exceedingly hurtful, so that it may justly be called The calamity of the earth. But as their vast number gives no power to defend themselves, even children can easily shake off, and gather, and slay them in heaps wherever they meet with them. This also, the Prophet declares, will befall those insatiable robbers; for, although they did much injury by plundering for a long period, they will at length be slain and destroyed without the smallest effort; because, deprived of manly vigor, and almost of life, they will fall into the power of their enemies; and the wealth of Nineveh, amassed by robbery, shall be carried to Babylon.

According to the running of locusts. He now adds another comparison, that the Babylonians will "run like locusts," to devour the whole country; for those creatures, being exceedingly voracious, and moving forward without interruption, and leaping with astonishing rapidity, consume all the fruits of the earth. Some refer it to the same Assyrians, as if the Prophet compared them to "locusts," because they will be easily dispersed; but that interpretation does not apply, for the Prophet draws up an army of "locusts," so as completely to cover in its march the whole land; and he beautifully draws a comparison between the "caterpillars" and the "locusts," on account of their insatiable avarice and vast numbers.

5. *Jehovah is exalted.* He explains more fully what we briefly noticed a little before, about the exaltation of God, and follows out the subject which we formerly mentioned,

that the destruction of a monarchy so powerful will make it evident how highly God values the salvation of his Church, for whose sake he will utterly ruin Nineveh, the queen of cities, and her inhabitants. This lesson is highly useful, that God does not spare reprobate and irreligious men; for, by opposing their unlawful desires, his object is to testify how much he loves his elect; and it is no ordinary consolation that the glory of God shines most brightly in the salvation of the Church.

Who dwelleth on high. First, he declares that God is raised "on high," whereas wicked men imagine that he was east down and humbled by the destruction of the people. Again, lest any one should think that God has only recovered what he lost, as it frequently happens in the world that they who have been vanguished, as soon as a favorable change takes place, again put forth fresh vigor, he expressly declares that God is "exalted" before the eyes of men, because this is due to him on account of his greatness, for he inhabiteth the heavens. Hence it follows, that although he frequently conceals his power, yet he never loses his right, but, whenever he thinks proper, openly displays his exalted rank; for to dwell "in the heavens" denotes, as we know, supreme authority, to which the whole world is subject. (Psalm 115:3.) In this manner he not only shews that God can easily and readily cast down all that is lofty in the world, but argues from God's eternal nature, that when God is despised by wicked men, he cannot, at length, do otherwise than manifest his glory; for otherwise he would "deny himself." (2 Timothy 2:13.)

He hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness. Thus he again confirms the statement, that it will be a proof of God's wonderful kindness, when the Jews shall be delivered from the tyranny ,of the Babylonians. It was proper to place

before their eyes the Author of so great a blessing; for we see how basely his glory is obscured by our ingratitude. Now, "the fullness of righteousness and judgment" means, that God will largely and copiously pour forth his kindness in restoring the Church. Yet it will not be unsuitable to view these words as referring to lawful order, when everything is justly and properly administered; for without this the Church will never enjoy prosperity, though everything else may succeed according to the wish. Holy and welladjusted order, therefore, and not corruptible riches, is the standard by which our prosperity should be judged.

6. And the stability of thy times shall be. He promises that the state of the kingdom under the reign of Hezekiah will yet be happy and prosperous, especially when he contrasts it with the wretched, destructive, and ruinous aspect which it exhibited under the reign of Ahaz; for, although the enemy had been driven out, hardly any one would have expected that the Jews, who had been so heavily oppressed, would be restored to their former order. As to the words, some translate them, "Truth, and strength, and salvation shall be in thy times;" as if the Prophet described the prosperity which the nation should enjoy under a pious king; and they think that each of those terms denotes so many of God's benefits. Others think that tnwma (emunath) denotes "fidelity," as if the Prophet said that it would be "salvation and strength." Others draw from it a somewhat different sense, that "strength, salvation, and knowledge" will be "stable" under the reign of Hezekiah. But when I examine closely the words of the Prophet, I choose rather to make a different distinction, that "stability, strength, and salvation will be established by wisdom, and knowledge," during the reign of Hezekiah.